DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 066 IR 052 703

TITLE	Preserving Today's Records for Tomorrow's Use: A Mandate for Action.
INSTITUTION	Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, Oklahoma City.
SPONS AGENCY	National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jan 85
NOTE	103p.; Appendices on microfiche are available from Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 200 NE 18th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Advisory Committees; *Archives; Government Publications; Hearings; Local Government; *Local History; Long Range Planning; Needs Assessment; *Preservation; Primary Sources; Program Development; Records (Forms); State Government; *State History; *Statewide Planning; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	*Oklahoma; *Records Management

ABSTRACT

This report presents the findings of a year-long investigation of historical records conditions and needs conducted by the Oklahoma Historical Advisory Board (OHRAB), a 12-member board appointed by the Governor to provide leadership and planning for the protection and use of the state's documentary heritage. Viewing the Oklahoma project as one component in a continuing cooperative process to ensure the preservation and accessibility of Oklahoma's historical records of enduring value, OHRAB designed the study to define issues, concerns, and specific problems in four general areas of historical documentation: state government records; local government records; nongovernmental records located in manuscript repositories, museums, libraries, and historical societies; and issues of statewide interest such as preservation, education, training, advisory and assistance services, and program coordination. The study identifies long and short term programs and services to address the recognized needs: specific actions required to implement these programs and services; and responsible parties among Oklahoma organizations and institutions for initiating these actions. Lengthy questionnaires were used to gain general information on conditions and needs from documentary resource custodians for each of the first three study areas. Task forces evaluated the questionnaire responses and six public meetings were held to hear the concerns and ideas of citizens, records custodians, and government officials. The survey questionnaires, the task force/study committee reports, a functional chart of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, and various additional study reports are appended. (EW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

PRESERVING TODAY'S RECORDS FOR TOMORROW'S USE

A Mandate for Action

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Howard P. Lowell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IR052703

Oklahoma Historical Records
Advisory Board
Oklahoma City
January, 1985

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Assessment and Reporting Project
Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board
Funded by the
National Historical Publications and Records Commission

THIS PUBLICATIONS, ISSUED BY THE OKLA
DEPT. OF LIBS. WAS PRINTED BY THE UNIV OF
OKLA. PRINTING SERVICES AS AUTHORIZED BY
65 O.S. 1981, SECTION 3-110. 1000 COPIES
HAVE BEEN PREPARED AND DISTRIBUTED AT
A COST OF $2,000.00 IN NHPRC FEDERAL FUNDS.

Oklahoma is more than just another state. It is a lens in which the long rays of time are focused into the brightest light. In its magnifying clarity, dim facts of the American character stand more clearly revealed. For in Oklahoma all the experiences that went into the making of a nation have been speeded up. Here all the American traits have been intensified. The one who can interpret Oklahoma can grasp the meaning of America in the modern world.

Angie Debo

Oklahoma: Foot-Loose and Fancy-Free. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949. vii.

A sense of the past delineates the shape of things to come, since all change is rooted in history. It also reveals tasks that must be fulfilled to secure the state's proper future.

H.W. Morgan and A.H. Morgan

Oklahoma: A History. New York Norton, 1977. 176.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Governor's Letter..... v

State Coordinator's Introduction vii

Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, 1984 .. xi

The Nature and Value of Historical Records 1

Executive Summary 7

State Government Records 16

Local Government Records 49

Historical Records Repositories 64

Statewide Services and Functions 72

Endnotes 81

Glossary 86

Appendices ..... Microfiche

A. Bellardo Evaluation of State Program
B. Analysis of State Records Legislation
C. Machine-Readable Records Study
D. Fleckner and Ham Report on Local Government Records
E. Survey Questionnaires
    1. Local Government Records
    2. Local Government Records Postcard
F. Task Force/Study Committee Reports
    1. State Government Records
    2. Local Government Records
    3. Historical Records Repositories
    4. Statewide Concerns/Cooperation
G. Oklahoma Department of Libraries Functional Chart

ILLUSTRATIONS

A good beginning. Carnegie Library, Statehood Day, 1907, Guthrie, Oklahoma. xii

A series of tents representing Anadarko Courthouse, 1901. 4

Election Proclamation for Statehood signed by Governor Frank Frantz, August 21, 1906. 15

State Records in the Pesthouse shortly after fire in 1969. 19

Archivist searching the records in the State Archives Division of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. 26

Rows of file cabinets and boxes show crowded conditions in state agencies before implementing Records Management Program. 36

Court records in boxes at an Oklahoma City warehouse. (Photographed by the Sunday Oklahoman.) 50

Books and boxes stacked randomly illustrate reference and retrieval problems. 65

Darkened by water and rot, historical documents show damage resulting from inferior facility. 71

A close-up of deteriorating historical documents. 78

GEORGE NIGH
GOVERNOR

STATE OF OKLAHOMA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
OKLAHOMA CITY

February 14, 1985

To the Citizens of Oklahoma:

This report represents the first comprehensive assessment of the condition of Oklahoma's historical records. My appreciation is expressed to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission for supporting this important study, and to the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board for both sponsoring the project and for the long hours they have devoted to ensuring its successful completion.

The Advisory Board's recommendations merit serious consideration by both the Legislature and by you as citizens. Oklahomans can be proud of the past which historical records document. And because the records found in state and local public agencies document and protect our rights and responsibilities, each of us has a vested interest in promoting their efficient management and preservation.

Each generation of Oklahomans has a responsibility to preserve our collective heritage for our children and their children. The Advisory Board's report, for the first time, offers us a sound basis for addressing this responsibility. As Governor, I endorse the Board's recommendations, and will lend my active support to achieving implementation of solutions to the critical problems the study identifies.

Sincerely,

George Nigh
Governor

OKLAHOMA!
CARING AND SHARING!

STATE COORDINATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Preserving Today's Records for Tomorrow's Use: A Mandate for Action is one result from a year-long project assessing historical records conditions and needs in Oklahoma. Sponsoring this study was the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) which received a $25,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to fund major project activities. The NHPRC, a federal program under the National Archives and Records Service (NARS), provides grant support for the preservation and use of historical records. OHRAB, a twelve member board appointed by the Governor to assist NHPRC in evaluating grant requests from Oklahoma, provides state leadership in planning for the preservation and use of historical records. Oklahoma is one of sixteen states conducting an assessment project in 1984; twenty-seven other states conducted similar studies in 1982.

OHRAB views the Oklahoma project as one component in a continuing cooperative process to ensure the preservation and accessibility of Oklahoma's historical records of enduring value. To that end, OHRAB designed the assessment study to define issues, concerns, and specific problems in four general areas of historical documentation - state government records; local government records; nongovernmental records located in manuscript repositories, museums, libraries, and historical societies; and issues of statewide interest such as preservation, education and training, advisory and assistance services, and program coordination.

It also designed the study to: (1) identify long-and short-term programs and services to address the recognized needs; (2) identify the specific actions required to implement these

programs and services; and (3) identify responsible parties from among Oklahoma organizations and institutions for initiating these actions.

Upon notification from NHPRC in late 1983 that its grant application to conduct the assessment project was successful, OHRAB contracted with Inez Dillon Prinster, an archives consultant who previously had conducted the South Dakota Assessment and Reporting Project, to direct the Oklahoma study. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries contributed office, staff, financial, and administrative support.

Data gathering took several forms. Lengthy questionnaires were used to gain general information on conditions and needs from documentary resource custodians for each of the first three study areas. OHRAB established task forces for each study area to evaluate responses to the questionnaires and to add information and ideas based on individual and institutional experiences. The Project Director and the State Coordinator conducted six public meetings - Enid, Bartlesville, Poteau, Durant, Lawton, and Guymon - at which citizens, records custodians, and government officials added their concerns and ideas. OHRAB held public hearings on the draft of this report in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. The data gathering phase of the project represents the most intense effort to analyze historical records conditions and needs in Oklahoma since the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Historical Records Survey projects of the 1930s.

State Government Records - Assessment of the state archives and records management program, administered by the Department of Libraries, took the form of a self-study by Department staff. OHRAB also contracted for the services of an outside evaluator for the state program, selecting Dr. Lewis J. Bellardo, State Archivist and Records Administrator for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Dr. Bellardo's full report appears as Appendix A.

Local Government Records - Since Oklahoma has no statutory authority for a comprehensive records management and archives program for local government, a primary emphasis in that area of the study was to assess the impact of this lack on the preservation and accessibility of local government records, and to judge the effect on public officials charged with these responsibilities. Further assessment of conditions and needs came as the Project Director and State Coordinator visited county and municipal officials and inspected local records storage facilities. Other needs are reflected in the Local Government Records Task Force report which appears in Appendix F.

Nongovernmental Records - Oklahoma has seven major repositories that maintain historical manuscripts, as well as hundreds of other institutions that number documentary resources of enduring value among their holdings. The primary vehicle for data gathering in this study area was the historical repositories questionnaire, supported by observations from the Historical Repositories Task Force and comments at public meetings.

Statewide Issues - In the area of statewide issues, focus was on strengthening the activities of existing organizations, specifically the Oklahoma Special Collections and Archives Network (OSCAN), the Oklahoma Chapter of the Western Conservation Congress (OCWCC), and O-DRAT, the Oklahoma Disaster Recovery Assistance Team. Oklahoma is a leader in the nation for statewide cooperation among historical repositories to meet collective needs. This fact is reflected throughout the report as actions to meet specific needs are suggested and responsibility for taking those actions are defined.

Many organizations and individuals contributed to the Oklahoma Assessment and Reporting Project. OHRAB wishes to acknowledge the assistance of all the records custodians who took time to respond to lengthy questionnaires, meet with the project staff, serve on task forces, and share their ideas in public meetings. This report is really their report, and the program of

actions it defines is their program.

Thanks are also in order to Robert L. Clark, Jr. and the staff of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries who supplied financial, administrative, and other tangible support to the study effort. Jan Blakely and Patricia Lester from ODL's Publications Division provided critical editorial judgment and production assistance in compiling this document. Sandy Riley and Alice Colbert, in their usual efficient way, provided word processing support. Tom Kremm, Head of the Records Management Division, and Brad Koplowitz, Head of the State Archives Division, chaired the task forces on Local Government Records and State Government Records respectively, and provided background and in-depth analysis for all study recommendations. And, finally, the Project Director, Inez Dillon Prinster left the beautiful mountains of Colorado for a year in Oklahoma, working to help us define our needs and the directions in which we must head. All Oklahomans owe her a debt of gratitude.

The Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, in sponsoring this study, recognizes the leadership role it must assume in providing for the preservation and accessibility of Oklahoma's historical records of enduring value. Action on the recommendations presented here is essential if our documentary heritage is to survive for future Oklahomans to study, to understand, and to enjoy. This report is indeed, as its title suggests, a Mandate for Action . We as citizens of Oklahoma must accept that mandate for preserving the evidence of our past. And we must accept that mandate now.

Howard P. Lowell
State Coordinator, OHRAB

January, 1985

OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD 1984

Dr. Brad Agnew
Northeastern State University

Robert L. Clark, Jr.
Oklahoma Department of Libraries

Louis Coleman
Oklahoma Historical Society

Dr. Mel Fiegel
Southwestern State University

Jack Haley
Western History Collections
University of Oklahoma

Dr. Marvin Kroeker
East Central State University

Lloyd Lentz, III
Logan County Historical Society

Earle Metcalf
Oklahoma Historical Society

Dr. Anne Morgan
Kerr Foundation

Dr. Dale Soden
Oklahoma Baptist University

Steve Wilson
Museum of the Great Plains

Howard P. Lowell
Oklahoma Department of Libraries
State Coordinator

A good beginning. Carnegie Library, Statehood Day, 1907, Guthrie, Oklahoma

THE NATURE AND VALUE OF HISTORICAL RECORDS

The records that individuals, organizations, and governments create often have value that transcends the immediate purpose for which they were created. Records evolve from a fundamental human need to compile information, keep track of it, store it, and retrieve it when required. Historical records contain information that documents past decisions and often determines current actions. Records created by government at various levels establish and protect the rights and responsibilities of both the government and the governed. Records created in the private sector document the actions of private enterprise, protect the investment of stockholders, and provide proof of legitimate business practices.

Together, records from public and private sectors combine to document our political, social, economic, and cultural development as a people, a state, and a nation. Oklahomans do not have unlimited time or financial resources to randomly experiment in correcting business or social problems, or in bettering our individual lives. These decisions in our complex world need to be formulated on a true understanding of what has taken place historically. The evidence of what has taken place is based in historical records.

Records of enduring value, often called archives, are a fundamental resource in a democratic society. Historical records include all documents that contain important information on past events. A few among the many types of valuable historical records found today in Oklahoma are: official documents of state,

county and local governments; private letters and diaries; account books; photographs; maps; architectural drawings and blueprints; planning documents; journals; case files; reports; and minutes. These records take many different physical formats - paper, microform, casette tape, video tape, film, computer tape, optical disk, and other machine-readable media. If historical records are not available to provide information when required, severe individual and societal hardships may occur.

Historical records have enduring value precisely because they can help us deal intelligently with the present and prepare for the future. Historical records are also a primary means by which we pass our culture from one generation to another, and they form the basic informational content from which one generation can learn from the past, perhaps discovering lessons that its predecessors chose to ignore. Preservation of historical records for future generations is a fiduciary responsibility which we as citizens hold for our children and their children.

In addition to serving as primary resources for researching the past, archives have other utilitarian uses. Historical records have continuing value for government officials, public interest groups, and business people as a source of information on past policies and decisions. They provide administrative continuity in times of crisis or changes in leadership. Historical records provide information that is essential for research into environmental, health, and welfare issues, as well as crucial details for the repair, renovation, or replacement of our buildings, bridges, streets, utilities, and other components of an aging infrastructure.

Governmental records at the county and municipal levels document our ownership of land, our birth, marriage, death, and other significant life events. They provide evidence of the passing of property to our heirs and assigns. They provide the official record of our litigations.

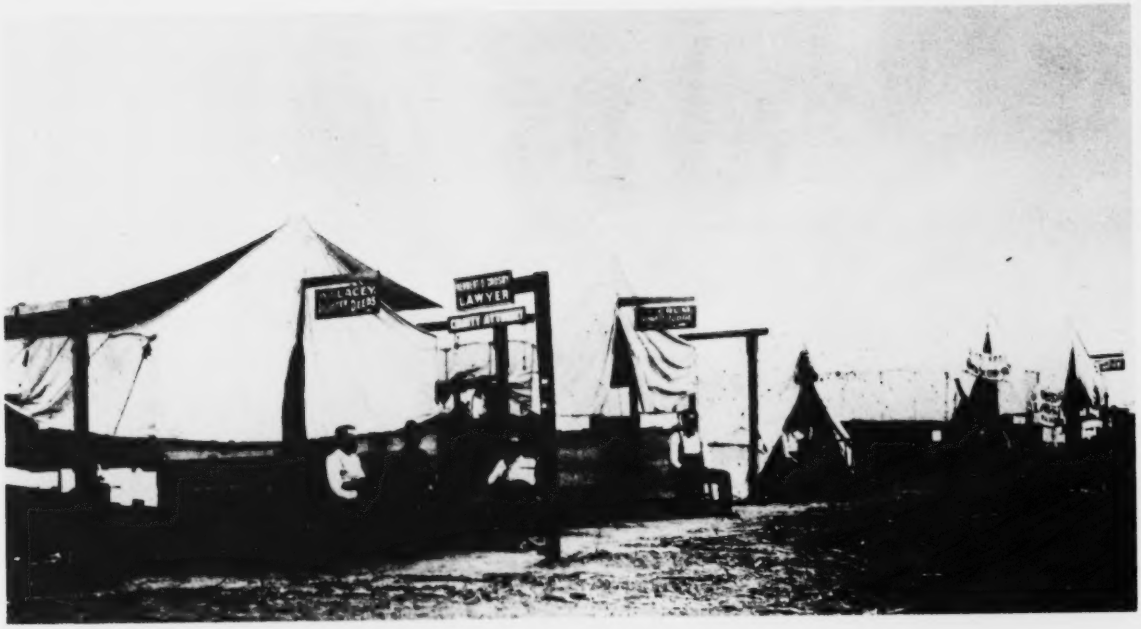
Governmental records at the state level document similar

events, and provide a record of public accountability in carrying out the mandates of the citizenry through their elected officials and the bureaucracy that serve them. The wide spectrum of records found in collections of historical societies, libraries, and museums provides further evidence of how we lived and grew as localities and as a state. Historical records, through the popular vehicle of historical fiction, serve to entertain as well as enlighten. In our schools, historical documents can teach analytical skills while developing cultural awareness and an appreciation of our common experience.

As a relatively young state, many of our major historical events - the land runs, the Territorial Period, statehood, the discovery and exploitation of our natural resources, the Dust Bowl, World War II, and the growth of the state in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s - occurred within the life span of people still living. But that time is rapidly passing. There are few Oklahomans alive today who participated in the land runs. The numbers who can remember Oklahoma before it became a state are dwindling. Without living memory, historical records take on additional importance as our link to the past and form a unique body of information not duplicated elsewhere. Entrusted into our care for preservation and use, they are our link, as a society, to our children and to the future.

CONCERN FOR HISTORICAL RECORDS IN OKLAHOMA

The Oklahoma experience is unique among the states. Achieving statehood in 1907 with the merging of Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory, inhabitants of both had expressed concern from the outset for preserving their history and the integrity of their public records.



A series of tents representing Anadarko Courthouse, 1901

The first Territorial Legislature passed legislation making the defacing or altering of public records a felony.[1] In each county, the governing authority was required to "furnish a fire-proof vault sufficient in which to keep all books, records, vouchers and papers pertaining to the business of the county."[2]

One of the early acts of the Legislature following statehood was to authorize public officials to transfer any records not required to be maintained in their office to the Oklahoma Historical Society.[3] These actions set a course that evolved into the comprehensive state archives and records management program of today. Significant legislation in that evolution includes the creation of a Records Commission in 1939,[4] formation of the present Archives and Records Commission in 1947,[5] and passage of both a Records Management Act and an Essential Records Act in 1961.[6] In 1949 the Legislature

---

4

established a County Archives and Records Commission for each county to act on the destruction of county records.[7] These commissions were abolished in 1972 leaving county records custodians with statutory destruction authorization for specified record series but with no integrated records system approach.[8]

Nongovernmental historical records also received early attention. In the early 1890s, two historical societies organized separately: one at the Indian Territory Press Association meeting in Kingfisher and one at the University of Oklahoma. They soon merged to become the Oklahoma Historical Society.[9] The Society's documentary holdings received one of its most valuable accessions when the United States Congress approved the Hastings Act in 1935, designating OHS as the official custodian of all federal field records pertaining to Indians in Oklahoma.[10]

A second major collection repository was established at the University of Oklahoma in 1927. The Western History Collection today is recognized internationally as one of the premier documentary resource centers for study of the American Southwest. Included as part of the Western History Collection program is the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center, founded in 1979. Other major collections are at the Great Plains, Central State University, and Northeastern State University. Several smaller collections of note are found in many Oklahoma libraries, museums, and historical societies.

Despite this long history of concern for our historical documents, the conditions under which the majority of Oklahoma's most valuable historical records are maintained and preserved are barely adequate at best, and often appalling. Stored in dirty attics and basements, without proper housing, environmental controls and security precautions, even in some of our best facilities, and without trained professional staff to administer them, the historical records that document our state and our lives will not survive the next century. They are at risk. The

City Manager of Oklahoma City, Scott Johnson, was quoted recently as saying that many of the city's old records are in jumbled boxes in the city's archives. "It might take years to find it, [a specific architectural drawing]."[11] The records storage conditions in Oklahoma City, unfortunately, are not unique in our state.

Preserving Today's Records for Tomorrow's Use is a challenge to every Oklahoman. Failure to meet this challenge will sever the thread of continuity that historical records provide from the past, through the present, and into the future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Oklahoma's historical records are in danger of being lost to future generations of Oklahomans. The records that document our common heritage and experience as a state and a people are vital resources in our democratic society. Records protect our legal rights, provide evidence of our past decisions and actions, and serve as links between the past, the present, and the future.

In Oklahoma, programs to preserve and make historical records accessible are often haphazard, ill-supported, and misunderstood. More energetic and cooperative plans to preserve, coordinate, and promote the preservation of Oklahoma's documentary heritage are essential if much of that heritage is to survive into the 21st century. This report, Preserving Today's Records for Tomorrow's Use: A Mandate for Action begins the planning process. It outlines the present status of historical records preservation in Oklahoma, identifies problems that must be addressed, and recommends a course of corrective action. It attempts to assess rather than accuse, recommend rather than demand. Its tone is intended to be positive, citing not only deficiencies, but also opportunities and benefits that will occur with implementation of its recommendations. It is intended to be a Mandate for Action.

BACKGROUND

Preserving Today's Records for Tomorrow's Use is a report to the Governor, Legislature, and citizens of Oklahoma on the findings of a year-long investigation of historical records needs conducted by the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB), a twelve member board appointed by the Governor to provide leadership and planning for the protection and use of Oklahoma's documentary heritage. The study was partially supported with a $25,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. It specifically addresses four areas of concern: state government records, local government records, nongovernmental records in historical repositories, and cooperative issues of statewide importance. Its main conclusion is that conditions under which historical records in Oklahoma are maintained are inadequate at best, and often appalling.

The survival of so many of our historical records through the past hundred years can be attributed to well-intentioned records custodians who have dedicated countless hours to the effort. But, the fact that these records still exist can often be attributed to luck or circumstance rather than to careful planning and properly staffed and supported programs. Indeed, OHRAB concludes that there is not one historical records repository in Oklahoma that receives the support required to meet minimal professional standards for the administration of its program responsibilities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

State Government Records

The records that state government creates have continuing value as sources of information for government officials, public interest groups, and Oklahoma citizens concerned with the operations and accountability of Oklahoma government. These records often define and protect the rights and responsibilities of both the governing and the governed. The efficient management of state records can lead to improved public administration and to significant cost savings. An efficient, effective state records program in Oklahoma is the collective responsibility of the records-creating agency, the Archives and Records Commission, and the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. OHRAB strongly asserts that additional program support is essential if the state archives and records management function is to achieve its full cost-savings potential. It must meet its responsibility to all Oklahomans by providing a state records management system that minimizes the allocation of scarce state agency resources for administrative "housekeeping" functions while providing for the permanent preservation of state records of enduring value.

OHRAB identifies the following concerns that need to be addressed if Oklahoma is to have a comprehensive, cost-effective state government records program:

*** If each agency is to manage its records efficiently, effectively, and economically, Oklahoma state government must move toward full agency compliance with the state records management program that the Legislature has mandated.

*** The archives and records management program within the Department of Libraries requires additional staff and program resources to fulfill even basic responsibilities under existing statutes.

*** The statutory mandate under which the program operates needs to be consolidated into one title with the elimination of conflicting provisions and existing agency exemptions. Immediate relief is required to remove the arbitrary five-year retention period mandated by 21 O.S. 1981, sec. 590.

*** The Department of Libraries needs to improve its operational programs and procedures, especially at the State Records Center, to make maximum use of existing and future resources allocated to the program.

*** State records that are created in machine-readable format using computers need to be included in the state program for records management.

*** Oklahoma needs a centralized micrographics service program to eliminate costly duplication of staff and equipment, and to ensure that microfilm applications meet Archives and Records Commission requirements for records disposition and microfilm quality.

*** Records of the court system need to be efficiently managed in conformity with the state records management program.

*** The State Archives needs to identify gaps in the historical documentation of Oklahoma state government, and then move to fill these gaps.

Local Government Records

The records created at the county and municipal levels in Oklahoma also serve as vital documentation to protect our rights, define our responsibilities, and serve as evidence of how our local governments function. Oklahoma has no coordinated program to manage the records of its political subdivisions. Indeed, OHRAB finds that most of these political subdivisions have no comprehensive, systematic program for managing records. Costly, inefficient records-creating and records storage practices result. At all levels of Oklahoma local government, access to older records is difficult at best, and often a specific record is impossible to locate. Records are housed in locations that speed their physical deterioration and present significant fire hazards. Questions of what records to preserve and what records to destroy are confusing, with only vague statutory guidance.

OHRAB identifies the following concerns that need to be addressed if local government records of historical value are to be preserved and accessible, and if local governments are to have cost-effective programs to manage their records:

*** Oklahoma must have a statewide, integrated program for records created and maintained by its political subdivisions.

*** There is an immediate need to provide secure, environmentally-controlled, fire-proof, clean storage facilities for local government records of enduring value.

*** The Department of Libraries needs staff and supporting resources to create a Local Records Management Unit within the state records management program to implement

a comprehensive, efficient, and effective program for the management of local government records, and for the preservation of local government archives.

Historical Records Repositories

Oklahoma has more than 400 separate institutions that house historical records, ranging from the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma to public libraries, small academic libraries, local historical societies, museums, churches, genealogical societies, corporations, and private individuals. Few of these collections have staff to adequately care for them or budgets to service them. Yet, it is these collections of historical records that form the bulk of our collective documentary heritage in Oklahoma.

OHRAB identifies the following concerns that need to be addressed if historical records custodians are to adequately provide for the care, preservation, and access to Oklahoma's historical manuscript collections:

*** The Oklahoma Historical Society needs staff and supporting resources to create an Historical Records Field Advisory Service to provide training and consulting assistance for historical records custodians at institutions and organizations that collect or maintain historical records.

*** Specific legislation to penalize individuals for the theft or wanton destruction of library and archival materials is an immediate need that requires legislation.

*** OHRAB should provide more leadership in assisting Oklahoma historical records repositories to secure adequate resources through federal grants and local funding initiatives in order to properly protect valuable historical records and make them available to the public.

Statewide Services and Functions

Oklahoma is a leader in the United States for cooperatively seeking solutions to common problems that all historical records custodians face. Two statewide organizations, the Oklahoma Chapter of the Western Conservation Congress (OCWCC), and the Oklahoma Special Collections and Archives Network (OSCAN) have brought together individuals and institutions to develop innovative programs that cross institutional lines. OCWCC is active in providing continuing education opportunities for historical records custodians and librarians seeking to better preserve their collections. Together with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, it has initiated O-DRAT, the Oklahoma Disaster Recovery Assistance Team, to aid in the salvage of library, archives, and government records holdings following a disaster. OSCAN, meanwhile, is developing programs to identify special collections and archival material relating to the Oklahoma experience and to improve access to Oklahoma's historical record. The Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, which sponsored this assessment study, will need to take an increasingly active leadership role in these cooperative endeavors.

OHRAB identifies the following concerns that need to be addressed if Oklahoma is to continue to build statewide cooperative programs and services to meet the collective needs of

both government records custodians and historical manuscripts and special collections curators:

*** There is a need to focus public attention on the value and uses of Oklahoma's historical records. Encouraging adoption of "Documenting Oklahoma History" as a theme for celebrating centennial observances of the land runs is a first step in this effort.

*** OHRAB needs dedicated administrative support to strengthen and coordinate the program efforts of organizations already working to provide cooperative solutions to common historical records problems. OHRAB must provide leadership to coordinate these endeavors and prevent duplication of effort and wasting of scarce resources.

*** Oklahoma needs to initiate a statewide preservation microfilming program to preserve historical information contained in records that have physically deteriorated to a degree that they no longer can be handled.

*** Oklahoma institutions need access to conservation treatment facilities for repair and restoration of deteriorated historical records. They also need professional preservation expertise to help each repository develop its own preservation effort.

CONCLUSION

Each concern presented in this Executive Summary is detailed fully within parallel sections of this report. Each need is

thoroughly discussed, and recommended actions offered.

As the title suggests, Preserving Today's Records for Tomorrow's Use is a mandate for action. OHRAB is committed to assuming its responsibility for leadership in coordinating these actions by working closely with the historical records community throughout Oklahoma. Progress toward satisfying the needs identified in this study will require the interest and strong support of both the government and the citizens of Oklahoma. It will require the allocation of adequate resources for historical records administration and government records management. It will require further recognition of the value that historical records and good records management bring to a democratic society. It will also require the continued efforts of historical records custodians to seize the opportunities outlined.

Preserving Today's Records for Tomorrow's Use: A Mandate for Action is both an assessment of where we are and a blueprint for where we need to be. It is a challenge to every Oklahoman. Failure to meet this challenge will sever the thread of continuity that historical records provide from the past, through the present, and into the future.

Election Proclamation for Statehood signed by Governor Frank Frantz, August 21, 1906

STATE GOVERNMENT RECORDS

BACKGROUND

Oklahoma has an integrated state records management and archives program administered by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. Its statutory authority is found in 67 O.S. 1981, 151 et seq. (Preservation of Essential Records Act), 67 O.S. 1981, 201 et seq. (Records Management Act), and 74 O.S. 1981, 564 et seq. as amended in 1983 by S.B. 218 (Archives Act). A statutory analysis of legislation governing the management of public records in Oklahoma appears as Appendix B of this report.

A state record is defined by statute as a record of: (1) a department, office, commission, board, authority, or other agency, however designated, of state government; (2) the State Legislature; (3) the Supreme Court, the Court of Criminal Appeals, or any other court of record, whether of statewide or local jurisdiction; and (4) any other record treated as a state record under state law.[12]

The intent of the Legislature in passing laws for the management and preservation of public records in Oklahoma is both explicit and implied by statute. In the Records Management Act and the Preservation of Essential Records Act, specific Legislative intent is delineated. It declares that:

> Programs for the efficient and economical management of State and local records will promote economy and efficiency in the day-to-day record-keeping activities of State and local government and will facilitate and expedite government operations.[13]

Further the Legislature declared that:

> Records containing information essential to the operations of government and to the protection of the rights and interests of persons must be protected against the destructive effects of all forms of disaster and must be available when needed. It is necessary, therefore, to adopt special provisions for the selection and preservation of essential State and local records thereby providing for the protection and availability of such information.[14]

The statutes also provide for an Archives and Records Commission which shall have "sole, entire and exclusive authority of the disposition for all public records and archives of state officers, departments, boards, commissions, agencies, and institutions of this state."[15] This Commission is composed of a member appointed by the Governor as chairman, the State Librarian and Archivist as vice-chairman and secretary, the State Treasurer, the State Auditor and Inspector, and the Lieutenant Governor, or a proxy for each. Specifically exempted from the disposition authority of the Archives and Records Commission are records of the state's political subdivisions, confidential records of the Oklahoma Tax Commission, and records of the State Bureau of Investigation.[16] The Department of Human Services is exempt from the Records Management Act and the Preservation of Essential Records Act.[17]

The Director of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, which serves as the operating arm of the Archives and Records Commission, is designated as the State Archivist, the State Records Administrator, Vice Chairman and Secretary of the Archives and Records Commission, and the Records Preservation Officer.[18] Administratively, the program is part of the Oklahoma Resources Branch of the Department under the Branch Administrator who functions as Chief Archivist. The program consists of a Records Management Division and a State Archives Division. The State Records Center and the agency's Micrographics Unit operate as part of the Records Management Division. The State Archives Division administers a Land Records

Unit for the current filing of public land survey corners.[19] A separate Office of Preservation Services is also located within the Oklahoma Resources Branch and a program for the preservation of state documents is found within the Branch's Publications Division.[20]

The evolution of Oklahoma's state archives and records management program can be traced directly to 1908 when the Legislature allowed:

> for any official or other person within this State, having custody of any seal, record, original paper or other document not required by the laws of this State to be retained as a part of the records of a public office, to transfer the same to the Oklahoma Historical Society . . .[21]

Few transfers resulted from this legislation, and in 1939 the State Librarian supported new legislation making the Oklahoma State Library the depository for official state records of archival value. This act created a Record Commission composed of the Attorney General as chairman, the State Examiner and Inspector, the State Auditor, the Librarian of the State Library, and the State Treasurer. The Commission was charged to:

> check over the records that are filed and retained by the various departments and institutions of the State, and to destroy such records, or at the request of the State Librarian, deposit such records in the State Library which, in its discretion, are of no further need and use to said departments and institutions, provided that no records within five (5) years of the current date shall be destroyed.[22]

This 1939 law forms the foundation for the current program. The duties of the Record Commission were redefined in 1947 with the creation of the Archives and Records Commission. Determination of the usefulness of a record to a state agency for the transaction of business shifted from the Commission to the

creating agency where the head was required to "consult with the State Librarian for the purpose of determining if such unnecessary records and archives are desired for deposit in the archives division of the Oklahoma State Library."[23] This legislation also gave the Archives and Records Commission its "sole, entire, and exclusive authority of the disposition for all public records and archives . . . "[24] The only substantive changes to the Commission's statute since 1947 occurred in 1975 when the Lieutenant Governor was added as a member replacing the State Examiner, and in 1979 when the Attorney General removed himself from the Commission, the Governor was empowered to appoint a Member as chairman, and members were allowed to designate a proxy.[25] In 1961 the Legislature passed laws establishing the records management program and the preservation of essential records program.[26] Both were modeled on legislation proposed by the Council of State Governments. However, agency compliance with these acts was permissive until 1968 when amendments to both removed the voluntary compliance provision, making each act

State Records in the Pesthouse shortly after fire in 1969

mandatory for state agencies.[27] In 1972, the Legislature enacted a law requiring microfilm quality control standards for the first time. Court records were specifically excluded from these standards as the Supreme Court has been empowered by statute to establish its own microfilming standards.[28]

Program implementation lagged behind legislation however, and in 1963, Ernst Posner, commenting on the archives and records management program in Oklahoma, wrote that:

> For the purposes of storage, the library has a dilapidated building in the outskirts of the city, colloquially called the pesthouse, into which departments have dumped records and books helter-skelter. The contents of this building are virtually uncontrolled.[29]

The inadequacy of the program was emphasized again in 1967 by the Oklahoma Management Study Committee which found that the state had 23,344 metal file cabinets, only 9,000 of which contained active records. The "dead files" occupied 116,000 square feet of office space, the equivalent of 2 1/2 football fields.[30] Major program improvements followed Posner's visit. The new Department of Libraries building, completed in 1973, provided the state archives with safe, clean, and secure storage. Another significant step was improved program staffing. The present Director of the Department of Libraries was hired half-time as a professional archivist in September, 1968, providing for the first time since the program's inception in 1939, a staff member at the state library agency with specific responsibilities for the state archives and records management program. He became full-time in August, 1969.

The pesthouse sustained a fire in June, 1969, resulting in considerable smoke and water damage to many documents and the loss of some Indian Territory Quit Claim Deeds, papers from Governor Haskell's administration, and administrative correspondence from the Oklahoma Historical Society. Later that

year, records were transferred from the pesthouse to a metal storage building in the Capitol Complex and to the old Union Station building. The metal building, with an addition completed in 1982, now serves as the State Records Center.

Prior to this OHRAB-sponsored Assessment and Reporting Project, the most intense evaluation of the state archives and records management program was a performance audit by the Oklahoma Legislative Council in 1977.[31] Council staff concluded:

> Compliance by state agencies to specific statutes concerning Records Management, Essential Records Preservation, and Archives has been inadequate. Less than a third of state agencies are submitting materials. . . . "Until March, 1977 the report is dated May 30, 1977 , most agencies began their participation in records management, only when faced with an impending move or when they had outgrown their available space and needed immediate relief.[32]

The Legislative Council staff also concluded that Oklahoma's archives and records management program, though mandatory by statute, remained one of "voluntary compliance." The evaluation report on the present state records management and archives program prepared by OHRAB's consultant, Dr. Lewis J. Bellardo, suggests that, although major gains have been made since 1977, the program still remains one of "voluntary compliance."[33]

Today the State Archives is housed on the third floor of the Department of Libraries Allen Wright Memorial Library Building in Oklahoma City. The State Records Center, located nearby, stores records that are no longer needed for active state agency administration but which must be maintained, in accordance with approved Archives and Records Commission records disposition schedules, for a specific period of time prior to destruction. The State Records Center also houses the ODL's Micrographics Unit and two vaults that provide storage for master negative microfilm

under Commission and American National Standards Institute standards. An estimated 44,000 rolls of film are stored in these vaults.

The State Records Center has a storage capacity of 23,000 cu.ft., including space occupied by library materials from the Department's Governmental Services Branch, with holdings of 14,226 cu.ft. at the end of FY'84. The Center also houses ca. 3,000 cu.ft. of archival drawings from the Department of Transportation for which there is no space in the Allen Wright Memorial Library Building. Archival holdings in the State Archives totaled 24,558 cu.ft. at the end of FY'84 in an archival storage area with a total 27,100 cu.ft. capacity.

The program staff consists of the Branch Administrator to whom the Department Director has delegated the day-to-day responsibility for program administration, 3 FTE professionals and 5 FTE support staff in the Records Management Division, including three technicians in the Micrographics Unit, and 3 FTE professionals and 2 FTE support staff in the State Archives Division. In addition, the Department's Preservation Officer provides .5 FTE to the conservation of archival records. FY'84 expenditures for the State Archives Division totaled $176,734 for salaries and benefits, and $8,886 for operations ($185,620). FY'84 expenditures for the Records Management Division totaled $108,225 for salaries and benefits, and $68,612 for operations ($176,837). Total expenditures during FY'84 for the combined archives and records management program in Oklahoma was $362,457.

The program to provide Oklahoma state government with an efficient, effective, and economical system to manage its records and preserve its archives of enduring value requires both additional resources and changes in direction. The work of the Oklahoma Legislative Council serves as a departure point for the needs and suggested actions that follow. Program limitations considered in 1977 - space, staffing, dependency on state agency personnel for initiating much of the pre-scheduling activity,

inconsistencies in the statutory authority for the program - are needs that have yet to be addressed satisfactorily. The State Government Records Task Force Report, staff responses to the NHPRC-suggested state records questionnaire, and the Bellardo Report, form the substantive findings from which needs and actions are derived. These represent the outline of a program to improve the State's archives and records management effort through the end of the 1980s.

NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NEED: Program Compliance

Oklahoma must move toward full agency compliance with the state records management program and the statutory mandate if each agency is to manage its records efficiently, effectively, and economically.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Department of Libraries should increase the visibility of the state archives and records management program within state government by considering renaming the Department, or at least the Oklahoma Resources Branch, to reflect public records responsibilities. The State Archives Division and the Records Management Division should initiate an on-going constituency information program, aimed primarily at state agency personnel through a combination of brochures, training and education programs, and other public relations materials. Active attempts should be made to secure cooperation from other state agencies that have staff responsibilities for the management of state government to assist with implementation of a government-wide,

comprehensive records management system for Oklahoma. The Archives and Records Commission and the Department of Libraries Board should jointly request the Governor to issue a letter to all state agency administrators urging their active support for the state records management program. Action on these recommendations should begin in FY'85.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Bellardo's report states:

> The nature and effectiveness of a public records program are in part the product of budget and staff. They are also a product of circumstances and influences which compose the framework within which it operates. These include the history of the program, its statutory authority, administrative placement, and physical plant.[34]

The "nature and effectiveness" is also a component of state agency compliance with provisions of the program. The Legislative Council's report in 1977 concludes "Until 1968, the Archives Act and the Records Management Act were essentially dormant . . . and that no action has been initiated under this 1961 Preservation of Essential Records act."[35] The Records Management Division staff today estimates that only 25% to 50% of all state agency records are under records inventory and schedule control. The inability of the staff to estimate the percentage of state records in compliance with statutory requirements itself is a statement on the lack of control the program has over creation, maintenance, and disposition of state records. The Legislative Council's report further states, "External factors affecting [Archives and Records Management] personnel include the degree of agency cooperation in properly identifying records for storage, destruction, or permanent retention; . . ."[36] State agency cooperation is essential to state agency compliance.

The archives and records management program needs a higher visibility within Oklahoma state government. The Department of Libraries could begin to achieve this increased visibility by associating the records functions more closely with other Department functions. One simple method for achieving this would be to identify it as the "Department of Libraries and Public Records" or a similar identifier when answering telephone calls incoming to the agency. Serious consideration should be given to officially changing the Department's name to reflect this key agency function. Both the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives and the Arizona Department of Libraries, Archives and Public Records bring attention to the records function in their agency titles. An administrative name change for the Oklahoma Resources Branch that would reflect its archives and records management functions would also increase program visibility. Changing the operating title for the Branch Administrator to a title more consistent with the term "archivist" or "records administrator" would lend a positive identity to the Branch's actual functions. Another simple change to emphasize the government records component of the Department's program to its own staff is to provide more information on the program in the ODL Handbook.

An additional activity to increase the visibility of the archives and records management program within state government is an upscaled educational and informational effort. The distribution list for ODL Record, the Records Management Division's newsletter, should expand to include state agency heads and should be issued six times per year. Content should also expand to reflect "comprehensive" records management programming. Coupled with this expanded role for ODL Record should be an expanded training and informational program aimed specifically at Records Management Coordinators in the agencies. These individuals are the key link between the state archives and records management program and each state agency.

Archivist searching the records in the State Archives Division of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries

The Department of Libraries should develop a slide-tape/public relations materials packet to introduce the archives and records management program services to both state agency heads and state agency personnel, as well as the general public. Formal training programs for Records Management Coordinators should take place quarterly, and also within individual state agencies, to support the efforts of agency Records Management Coordinators. The Archives and Records Commission and the Department of Libraries Board should jointly request the Governor to issue a letter to all state agency administrators reminding them of the statutory requirements for the program and urging their active support of staff efforts to implement good records management practices in their respective agencies. The underlying premise of this letter should be that records management is fundamental to sound, cost-effective public administration, and that diversion of agency funds from records-keeping activities to the services that the agency is charged to provide is the basic mission of Oklahoma's records management effort.

NEED: Program Resources

The archives and records management program within the Department of Libraries requires additional resources to fulfill even basic responsibilities under existing statutes, and to provide support for the Archives and Records Commission in its program for the disposition of state records. Critical resources required are both professional and support staff, plus adequate records storage space.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Department of Libraries should request five professional positions and four support positions in its FY'87 budget request. Other personnel actions that should begin in FY'86 include establishing a professional records management classification series and a records technician series, realigning the archivist series, and establishing a staff development program within the Oklahoma Resources Branch. The Department should also request funds for construction or acquisition of a State Records Center, or for renovation of an existing state-owned structure, that will meet the state's temporary records storage needs to the year 2000. An alternative is to secure a long-term lease for acceptable records center storage space. Further adaptation of the present State Records Center should be discontinued. Long-term personnel and operating resources should meet a level by FY'89 that will enable the agency to implement a truly comprehensive records management system for Oklahoma. The Department should initiate a fee program in FY'86 to make Records Management Division services partially self-supporting. Additional archival housing should continue to be a Department priority in expansion plans for the Allen Wright Memorial Library

Building. Ultimately, success in achieving the goals outlined in this report will depend upon the allocation of adequate program resources.

DISCUSSION:

> The Oklahoma records management program is grossly understaffed. . . . It is impossible to expect the present records management staff to ever get control of a records system of a state bureaucracy the size of Oklahoma's, and until it is at least doubled or tripled, state government will continue to waste millions of dollars each year.[37]

This basic conclusion of OHRAB's consultant evaluating the state archives and records management program pinpoints the fundamental inability of the program to meet its statutory requirements, and to provide Oklahoma with a cost-effective program for managing state records. One comparison makes this abundantly clear. New Jersey has 25 professional records management analysts committed to the same program functions to which Oklahoma has 1.5 professional FTE's assigned.[38]

Staff size and allocation alone do not provide solutions to the program staffing problem. Recruiting qualified staff, and retaining them, is equally important. The present classification structure authorized by the State Office of Personnel Management is inadequate to meet program needs. There is no separate classification for records management professionals, and currently the only appropriate professional series from which to recruit these candidates consists of "Archivist," "Senior Archivist", and "Chief Archivist." Records management is a recognized professional discipline, separate from both the professions of archives and librarianship. The state's classification system should reflect this reality. The Department of Libraries should continue its current effort to work with the Office of Personnel Management to realize this

change.

The archivist series also needs to be revised to provide for career mobility within the classification. The separate classifications should be readjusted to reflect equal status and compensation for similar functions and responsibilities in the librarian series.

The State Office of Personnel Management should establish a new classification of records technician. This classification would serve both the State Archives Division and the Records Management Division providing competent paraprofessional staffing for each. The minimum qualification should be a college degree, or a comparable amount of experience in an archives or records management setting. Currently there is no level of personnel classification between beginning professional positions that require an advanced degree, and clerical or stock clerk positions requiring high school education. Without this paraprofessional level, professional staff positions cannot be used efficiently.

Both existing professional and support staff need a structured program for continuing education and staff development. This program should be in addition to the training opportunities offered by the State Office of Personnel Management. As part of the Employment Service Evaluation (ESE) annual evaluation process, each supervisor and individual staff member should outline an annual training program. Elements of the program might include professional meetings and seminars, specific projects, visits to other programs and institutions, or formal coursework. The Oklahoma Resources Branch budget should be increased to support this activity.

Space to accommodate records of enduring value is another immediate problem. Simply stated, the program is fast running out of space in the Allen Wright Memorial Library Building to house the state archives. Legislative action on the proposal to expand the Department's building is needed in FY'86.

The State Records Center space situation is even more

critical. A moderate increase in agency compliance with the Records Management Act and the Archives Act will cause the system to break down completely. The layout deficiencies of the present State Records Center are detailed in the Bellardo report.[39] The facility is inefficient in design and storage capacity, and to commit further resources to its upgrading will produce modest and costly gains at best. For example, renovating the so-called "garage" area will gain two years worth of storage space at an estimated cost of $75,000, while adding to the compact shelving unit on the mezzanine level will gain four months worth of storage space at an estimated cost of $15,000. The cost benefit ratio for records center storage over storage of inactive records in active office space should approach 20:1.[40] Clearly it is advantageous to Oklahoma to invest in constructing or remodeling an existing structure as a records center that meets recognized structural and storage criteria for this type of facility. Incorporating records center space into an addition to the Allen Wright Memorial Library Building is not recommended. Records center space is essentially comparable to warehouse storage, and to include it within a building designed specifically for archival storage and preservation, or for library materials, is not a cost effective design strategy.

Any planned expansion of the Allen Wright Memorial Library Building should include adequate space for the conservation laboratory. This laboratory should be equipped to provide for all basic archives and library conservation procedures, and provide space for a staff of three by FY'89 to perform these treatments. Likewise, a new or renovated records center should provide adequate micrographics facilities for a centralized state micrographics service bureau. The present micrographics area in the State Records Center is dirty and inefficient, with storage vaults that do not meet ANSI and Archives and Records Commission standards for storage of master negative microfilm on a consistent basis. As an interim measure, the present

micrographics area should be walled and separated from records storage areas.

The Department of Libraries should move immediately to add a fire detection system to complement the fire suppression system in the archives stack area. The Department should also move to have the State Office of Public Affairs replace the roof on the Allen Wright Memorial Library Building. Leaks occur at a frequency that places continued preservation of the state archives at risk.

The allocation of funds to support operation of the state archives and records management program will necessarily have to increase to support expanded staff and facilities. Partial cost recovery for the State Records Center operation can be achieved through a fee system for Records Management Division services. One example would be to charge agencies for storage of records in the State Records Center. The Department of Libraries Board should initiate this fee system in FY'86 using the income generated to support expansion toward a more comprehensive records management program of assistance to state government.

Archival records are in the legal and physical custody of the Department of Libraries. No fee for general State Archives Division services to state government should be assessed. Fees for specialized services, such as records copying, should continue and should be raised to recover actual costs for services provided.

NEED: Legislation

The statutory authority under which the state operates its records management program, preservation of essential records program, disposition program of the Archives and Records Commission, and other records programs, needs to be consolidated into one title and chapter of the Oklahoma Statutes. Agency exemptions to provisions of the existing laws should be

eliminated. An immediate legislative need is to remove the arbitrary 5-year retention period for financial or business records in 21 O.S. 1981, sec. 590.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Archives and Records Commission and the State Records Administrator, jointly, should seek Legislative action in the 1986 session to recodify laws governing creation, maintenance, and disposition of state records into a single title and chapter of the Oklahoma Statutes. Agency exemptions to current provisions of the laws governing the program should be removed. The State Records Administrator should seek sponsorship in the 1985 session for an amendment to 21 O.S., 1981, sec. 590, removing the mandatory five year retention period and placing disposition of financial and business records of an agency under the jurisdiction of the Archives and Records Commission. The Commission and the State Records Administrator should also consider for the 1986 session: criminal or civil penalty for unlawful destruction, theft, or mutilation of government records; a statute of limitation on the time most confidential government records must remain restricted from public access; reinstating the Attorney General as a member of the Archives and Records Commission; expanding Commission membership to include representation from the Legislative and Judicial Branches; clarifying the relationship of the Archives and Records Commission to records of the Legislative and Judicial Branches and to state institutions of higher education; and repealing the Preservation of Essential Records Act, incorporating its operating provisions within the Records Management Act. The question of legislative changes governing an archives and records management program for the state's political subdivisions and for the courts will be addressed later in this report.

DISCUSSION:

The primary laws governing the state records management and archives programs are found in three separate places in the statutes: 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 151 et seq.; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 201 et seq.; and 74 O.S. 1981, sec. 564 et seq. as amended in 1983. This situation causes confusion in interpreting the Legislature's mandate for the program to state agencies, and in certain cases offers seemingly contradictory guidance. For example, Title 74 requires the Secretary of the Archives and Records Commission to conduct a survey of agency records. The disposition of these records is then determined by him and submitted to the Archives and Records Commission. Title 67, however, while charging the State Records Administrator to monitor agency programs, requires the agency head to submit schedules with retention requirements to the Archives and Records Commission.[41] Title 67 defines records of the Legislative and Judicial Branches as state records, then appears to make the program permissive for these Branches.[42] Present law exempts the Department of Human Services (DHS) from the Records Management Act, and also exempts confidential records of the Tax Commission and all records from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation from Archives and Records Commission authority. These exemptions should be eliminated. Confidential records are state records, and should be treated as such in a comprehensive records management system. There seems no justification for exempting the state's largest records creator, DHS, from being subject to the state's records management program. Records created by state institutions of higher education should be specifically included in the definition of state records which are subject to the program.

Immediate relief is needed from the mandated five year statutory retention for financial and business records provided in Section 590 of Title 21. This arbitrary retention period is

unnecessary given the authority of the Archives and Records Commission as responsible agent of the state and its citizens for authorizing records destruction. The present law means that records unnecessary for the day-to-day operations of state government, having no permanent value, and having no value as evidence of financial or business transactions of an agency, must be retained for five years in either the State Records Center or expensive agency office space. An agency head who destroys records without Commission approval would still be subject to a felony conviction, and, as further protection, the Archives and Records Commission law requires that the Commission unanimously approve destruction of records less than five years old.[43] Language should be added to this legislation to include other actions, such as theft or mutilation, that destroy information and to specify that the person committing the destructive action is liable for prosecution. In its present version, the agency head is liable for not only his actions but also for the actions of his employees. This amendment should provide the same penalty for a member of the general public who steals, mutilates, or destroys government records as it does for a public official.

The Preservation of Essential Records Act, which places the Archives and Records Commission in an inconsistent advisory capacity to the State Records Administrator, should be repealed. The fundamental intent of this law, to provide security copies of records to continue the operation of an agency or to protect citizen rights if the original records are lost or destroyed as a result of a disaster, is sound. However, this program can easily be incorporated into the Archives and Records Commission disposition scheduling process and the duties of the Records Management Division staff, under the Records Management Act.

Confidential records that the Archives and Records Commission judges to have permanent value remain closed to inspection in perpetuity under existing law. Most confidential records lose

their "confidentiality" with the passage of time. An example is federal census records that are used by genealogists for researching family information. These records are closed for a period of seventy-five years prior to being open for research use. Opening of many confidential records in the National Archives is governed by regulation.[44] OHRAB recommends that Oklahoma adopt a law that would open confidential records to research use after seventy-five years, on approval of both the creating agency or its successor in function, if any, and the Archives and Records Commission.

The Oklahoma law on confidential records is an excellent one that allows maximum citizen access to information about our government and what it is doing. Generally, all records are open to public inspection at reasonable times unless specifically restricted by statute or rule and regulation. OHRAB recommends one change. Presently, if a citizen is denied access to records that he or she believes are not confidential, the only recourse is through the court system. OHRAB recommends that a section be added to the Archives Act making the Archives and Records Commission the first point of review. The Commission's sole action in such a review should be to find that statutory or regulatory authority does exist for denying citizen access to the records, or to require the agency head to appear before the Commission to justify denial of access where such statutes or regulations are not in evidence.

Two final amendments are required to the Archives Act. The Commission represents the public through the Governor's appointment of a chairman and the services of elected public officials (with the exception of the vice-chairman). Commission membership also represents a variety of viewpoints from which records disposition decisions are made - fiscal (the State Auditor and Inspector and the State Treasurer); administrative (the Lieutenant Governor and the State Records Administrator); and research (the State Archivist and the Governor's

appointee). Presently the Commission does not have a member who considers disposition requests from the legal perspective. The Attorney General, the state's chief legal counsel, should be added to the Archives and Records Commission membership again.

Also lacking representation on the Archives and Records Commission are the Legislative and Judicial Branches. The Commission should consider sponsoring legislation to add to its membership the Administrative Director for the Courts and one representative from each chamber, appointed by the presiding officer. A balanced representation on the Commission would reflect the intent that the archives and records management program serve all three branches of Oklahoma government equally.

Rows of file cabinets and boxes show crowded conditions in state agencies before implementing Records Management Program

NEED: Program

The Department of Libraries needs to improve the operations and procedures of the State Archives Division, and the Records Management Division, especially at the State Records Center, to make maximum use of existing and future resources allocated to provide Oklahoma with an efficient, effective program for managing state government records.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Resources Branch should initiate immediately a long-range planning effort for the state program. The initial focus for this planning effort should be the Bellardo report and the concerns it expresses on the efficient use of resources. The planning effort should include intense investigation of computer applications together with necessary changes in manual procedures and record-keeping that will enable the integration of computer systems into the program. Specific actions should be initiated in 1985 to improve program effectiveness. These include: more training and contact with agency Records Management Coordinators; improved office environment for State Records Center personnel; and cooperative programs with the Office of Public Affairs and the State Auditor and Inspector to ensure program compliance and effectiveness. Until additional resources are provided, the Records Management Division program should concentrate on records disposition scheduling and operation of the State Records Center.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Bellardo points out several program activities and procedures in both the State Archives Division and the Records Management Division, and especially at the State Records Center, where improved economies and efficiencies can be achieved. The

need to establish a continuing planning mechanism became apparent from staff responses to the staff evaluation questionnaire indicating that sufficient long-range planning does not now take place in the program. The Oklahoma Resources Branch Administrator should immediately create a program planning team, with himself as chairman and consisting of the heads of both the State Archives Division and the Records Management Division, the Preservation Officer, and other staff as appropriate to specific study topics, to develop one, three, and five year plans, considering all topics raised in the Bellardo report. This planning and self-evaluation process should be a continuing one.

Among the concerns Dr. Bellardo expressed, several require attention within the 1985 calendar year. Staff office space at the State Records Center should be redesigned with partitions purchased to give employees some sense of privacy in which to work. Adequate office furniture to replace "surplus property" desks and chairs should be purchased at the beginning of FY'86. Purchase of lift equipment as an alternative to using the elevator should be investigated to improve access to the mezzanine stack from the receiving area. Procedures should be streamlined and new ones initiated where needed. New or revised forms to support procedures should be drafted. All forms should meet professional criteria for good forms management, and should be designed with consideration for future computer applications. A schedule compliance "tickler" system is needed, both for destructions from the State Records Center and for each agency with an approved records schedule. This latter procedure should be used to check on agency compliance at least annually. Reference request procedures also need to be streamlined.

Records management staff members estimate that only 25% to 50% of all state agency records are covered by approved retention schedules.[45] The imprecise nature of this estimate is an example of the problem - inadequate knowledge about what records exist and inadequate, partial retention schedules for many agencies.

Comprehensive records schedules are needed for all state agencies. "And without adequate schedules, forms management, vital records, and effective machine readable records programs can not be carried out successfully."[46] There should be cutting of "absurdly long retention periods which exist for some record series" such as claims and warrants.[47] "A high priority should be to either completely revise existing schedules which are not comprehensive, or else to systematize these schedules, have the agencies review them, and then have the Archives and Records Commission reenact them in their new form."[48] Many older schedules simply need to be redone. Yet, with attention to scheduling also comes the need to take a broader look at an agency's records management effort. Staff must have a balanced program approach.

One tool in particular is effective in saving staff time. The Archives and Records Commission should adopt General Schedules for records common to several state agencies. Examples would be in the areas of financial records, personnel records, and convenience files. Staff should investigate similar schedules from other states in developing these.

The Records Management Division should target one agency in FY'86 for a pilot comprehensive records management audit project. This analysis should result in a written document, and serve as a model for the type of records management consultation service the division should provide.

The keys to success for a comprehensive records management program are the quality, knowledge, and commitment to records management of agency Records Management Coordinators. These individuals, on the staffs of state agencies, form the link between the State Archives Division are State Records Management Division staff and each state agency. Continued updating and additions to the Records Management Coordinator's Records Management Manual are essential to this liaison, as are frequent contact and training for these individials. The ODL Records

should be issued more frequently, at least six times per year, and records management workshops should be conducted quarterly.

> The effectiveness of the program would be greatly enhanced by requiring each state agency to submit a list or schedule of its records, followed by annual reviews. Such provision might be linked to a requirement to show compliance when requesting additional space or equipment.[49]

This idea of linking program compliance with purchase requests that the Legislative Council audit team proposed in 1977 has yet to be implemented. Action to put the review process into place should begin in FY'85. A procedure to route requests for records storage equipment, office or storage space, or specialized equipment, such as microfilm cameras, from the State Office of Public Affairs through the Records Management Division would provide two benefits. First, state agencies would not be allowed to purchase additional equipment or rent space that is not needed if the agency is in full compliance with the Records Management Act. Second, Records Management Division review of purchase requests would ensure that records-creating and records-keeping equipment and supplies meet recognized criteria for efficient and economical records operations, and also meet all requirements of state statutes and rules and regulations.

The Archives and Records Commission should also request the State Auditor and Inspector, as an audit procedure, to verify that the state agency being audited has a comprehensive, Commission approved records disposition schedule covering all its records; has at least one appointed Records Management Coordinator serving as liaison between the agency and the Records Management Division; and follows the approved records disposition schedule.

NEED: Machine-Readable Records Program

State records that are created and maintained in machine-readable format using computers need to be included in the state program for managing its records.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Department of Libraries and the Archives and Records Commission should jointly request assistance and cooperation from the Office of State Finance - the agency responsible for data processing controls in the state - to integrate machine-readable records (MRR) into the records scheduling, management, disposition and preservation program that the Legislature has charged the Department of Libraries and the Archives and Records Commission to administer, consistent with the charge to the Office of State Finance in the area of data processing management. The Department of Libraries should also implement in FY'86, the pilot project proposed by ORB staff in Planning and Implementing a Program for Managing the Machine-Readable Records of Oklahoma State Agencies.[50] A copy of this report is found in Appendix C.

DISCUSSION:

Records are defined as state records in Title 67, "regardless of physical form or characteristics," and the Attorney General has ruled officially that this definition encompasses machine-readable records.[51] A recent nationwide study indicates that of 24 basic records creating and maintenance practices common to state governments, Oklahoma employed one or more computer applications in 83% of them.[52] A 1982 report found that 35 Oklahoma state agencies utilized one or more automated records systems in the management of substantive program

operations, and 15 more agencies applied automation to one or more routine administrative functions.[53]

The increased use of electronic records-creating and maintenance systems has a potential impact on the management of state information that equals introduction of the telephone, and on the ways in which records-creating and maintenance tasks are performed that equals introduction of the typewriter or the vertical file cabinet. If electronic information is to be managed efficiently, it must be systematically created, maintained and purged from the system in a planned fashion. Records that are archival in nature - those that document the policies, procedures, purposes, and essential transactions of the government - must be preserved according to law, and in a form that ensures their permanent preservation and accessibility for research use in the future. The accomplishment of these two objectives - efficient creation and management of the record, and preservation of government information having archival value for future use - is not a simple task. It requires detailed planning, and must involve the Department of Libraries staff at the earliest stages of state agency systems design. If archival decisions are not made at the time of design, the Archives and Records Commission cannot maintain adequate documentation of state government in Oklahoma. It is imperative that this effort begin, and begin now. A failure to take action for the management and archival preservation of state records in machine-readable format within the next two years means that Oklahoma will have a significant gap in the public record, and that state agencies will have to maintain costly, inefficient, parallel hardcopy records systems to provide evidence of the transactions of Oklahoma government.

The report on machine-readable records management that the Department of Libraries produced sets forth a pilot project to develop staff expertise and explore alternative approaches to the problem. The Department should provide resources to implement

this project in FY'86. If Legislative appropriation is not available, the Department, the Archives and Records Commission, OHRAB, and the Office of State Finance should jointly seek grant support for the pilot. One test site to study is the Department of Libraries itself which is implementing a Local Area Network (LAN) system for internal records operations.

NEED: Micrographics

Oklahoma needs a centralized micrographics service program to eliminate costly duplication of staff and equipment in state agencies and inappropriate uses of microfilm that are not cost effective or that do not meet state requirements for microfilm quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Archives and Records Commission and the State Records Administrator should jointly seek in FY'86, authorization through legislation or Executive Order to centralize all microfilming operations in Oklahoma government. State agencies with applications that meet criteria for efficient microfilm production should continue "in-house" operations. The Archives and Records Commission should establish these criteria by rule and regulation, including a process for certifying "in-house" programs for quality control and bibliographic procedures. 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 301 needs to be amended to reflect, as basic criteria, the national standards promulgated by the American National Standards Institute. The Records Management Division should survey state agency microfilming activities during FY'85.

DISCUSSION:

Microfilm is a records management tool which, when inappropriately used, is not cost-beneficial. Microfilming is also a technical skill requiring trained operators. When filming is done on-site in agencies where the volume of filming does not warrant full-time personnel and use of equipment, an "in-house" microfilming program cannot be cost-justified. Oklahoma government could consolidate the resources committed to these part-time, "in-house" operations into a central micrographics services program and achieve both cost savings and improved technical efficiency. Any central micrographics program ought to be self-supporting through service fees charged to other state agencies. The Office of State Finance should investigate this alternative for Oklahoma, considering the existing programs of both Prison Industries and the Oklahoma Department of Libraries as possible service providers.

The present statute governing microfilming refers to "minimum standards of quality approved for permanent photographic records by the National Bureau of Standards. . . ."[54] This language should be amended to include standards for permanent microfilm issued by the American National Standards Institute. Court records should not be exempt from these standards. Section 303 of Title 67 and section 34, paragraph 3 of Title 20 both should be repealed. All microfilm produced by state and local government in Oklahoma should conform to the "Uniform Photographic Copies of Business and Public Records as Evidence Act"[55] to which Oklahoma is a party.

NEED: Court Records Management

Records of the court system need to be efficiently managed in conformity with the Records Management Act and the Archives Act.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Administrative Director for the Courts, the State Records Administrator, and the Archives and Records Commission should jointly develop a comprehensive program for the management of court records in Oklahoma. This initiative should begin in FY'85.

DISCUSSION:

"A record of the Supreme Court, the Court of Criminal Appeals or any other court of records, whether of statewide or local jurisdiction" is defined as a "state record."[56] Under section 208 of Title 67, the Judicial Branch may request a "program of services similar to those available to the executive branch." The Office of the Court Administrator should initiate this request and end the inefficient program of simple records storage in the State Archives that now exists, substituting a comprehensive court records management program based on those being developed by the National Center for State Courts. Currently the State Archives houses more than 8,000 cubic feet of unscheduled records of the Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals. Only the Workers' Compensation Court has a records disposition schedule approved by the Archives and Records Commission. A starting point for developing the court records management program is the planning report that Donald Skupsky from the National Center for State Courts prepared for Oklahoma in 1979.[57]

Court records management in the counties is a critical problem that requires immediate attention if permanently valuable court records are physically to survive their storage environments. It is addressed more fully in the section of this report on Local Government Records.

NEED: State Archives

The State Archives Division needs to analyze its holdings to identify records of less than permanent value previously accessioned into the Archives, and to identify gaps in the historical documentation of Oklahoma state government.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The State Archives Division needs to be more actively involved in the review of proposed schedules and the appraisal of records for archival value. Archives staff should review inventory forms and physically inspect records in an agency when necessary. Personnel in the Records Management Division should provide inventory forms to State Archives Division staff prior to drafting a proposed records disposition schedule. The Archives and Records Commission should require transfer of permanently valuable records not needed for day-to-day agency administration to the State Archives rather than allowing the agency to retain them in active office space.

DISCUSSION:

The State Archives Division needs to analyze current holdings. This review should be completed during 1985 and any deaccession recommendations made to the Commission at its January, 1986 meeting. One reason to undertake a comprehensive review is the space shortage that the State Archives Division faces. A second is to identify gaps in the historical documentation of the state. A third is to target specific record series as candidates for preservation microfilming.

The State Archives Division should house all the permanently valuable records of state government not required for day-to-day agency operations. Presently, records disposition schedules

often allow an agency to retain "archives" in its active office space. The Archives and Records Commission should not allow this practice to continue.

Staff in the State Archives Division need to enter the records disposition scheduling process to make archival appraisals at an earlier point than at present. The Records Management Division has employed staff trained as archivists or historians, but current plans to make the program more broad based will require staff with other backgrounds. Archivists should review inventory forms for records of possible archival value unique to the agency being scheduled, and should physically inspect the records series if required. This work would strengthen the collegial review system in which staff from both the State Archives Division and the Records Management Division meet together to agree on a recommended disposition program to present to the Archives and Records Commission for action. The influence of agency personnel in making appraisal judgments on which records have historical or other permanent value should be lessened. Appraisal is the archivist's responsibility.

CONCLUSION:

OHRAB makes its analysis of concerns that the Department of Libraries, the Archives and Records Commission, and other entities of state government need to address to strengthen the state archives and records management program with an understanding that Oklahoma has both the legal framework and beginning structure to achieve the objectives the Legislature mandated when creating the program. "Programs for the efficient and effective management of state . . . records will promote economy and efficiency in the day-to-day record-keeping activities . . . and will facilitate and expedite government operations." [58]

OHRAB, too, realizes that economic conditions in Oklahoma makes allocation of additional resources to support existing programs difficult. However, additional resources are required if the archives and records management function is to achieve full potential, and meet its responsibility to all Oklahomans to provide a state government records management system that minimizes allocation of state agency resources for housekeeping functions. Instead, these resources can be used for program services that the Legislature established each state agency to provide, while ensuring that records documenting the rights and responsibilities of individuals, the collective citizenry, and the government itself are maintained, preserved, and available for use.

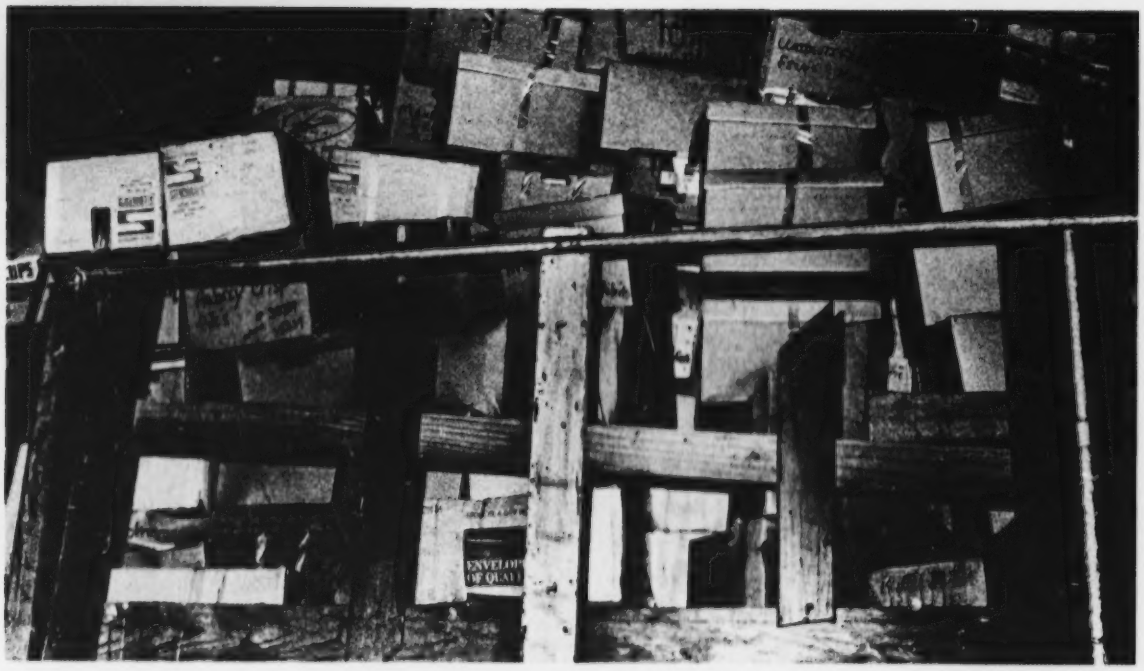
LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS

BACKGROUND

The Organic Act of 1890 creating Oklahoma Territory, and the State Constitution, form the basic framework for organizing counties and municipalities in Oklahoma.

In establishing these political subdivisions, the state's early leaders expressed concern for the safety and integrity of local government records. They provided, for example, a felony penalty for defacing or forging a public record, and required fire-proof vaults for housing records.[59] No attempt to coordinate the preservation of local government records of enduring value appeared, however, until 1935 when the Legislature authorized "Any official of the State, or any sub-division thereof, having the custody of any seal, record, original paper or other document not required by laws of this State to be retained as part of the record of such office . . . [to] transfer the same to the Oklahoma Historical Society."[60] As was the case with state records custodians, local government officials transferred few records to OHS.

In 1949, the Legislature passed a bill authorizing the creation of a County Archives and Records Commission for each county. Consisting of the County Attorney as chairman, the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners as vice-chairman, the County Clerk as secretary, and the County Treasurer and County Court Clerk as members, the function of the commissions paralleled that of the State Archives and Records Commission. The basic mission was to have "authority for the disposition of all public records and archives of the county government."[61] This system of county archives and records commissions proved unworkable, and the Legislature abolished them in 1972,



Court records in boxes at an Oklahoma City warehouse. (Photographed by the Sunday Oklahoman.*)*

substituting in Title 19 a listing of specific records and the length of time each had to be maintained prior to destruction.[62]

This 1972 legislation also recognized a role for the Oklahoma Department of Libraries in preserving historically valuable local government records by allowing, but not requiring, county treasurers, clerks and assessors to give records authorized for destruction to the "State Library" if requested.[63] There is no requirement, however, that these county officials notify the Department of Libraries prior to destroying records. County Court Clerks are required to notify the Department and offer certain records to the State Archives prior to destroying them.[64] There is no comparable statutory disposition guidance for municipal records custodians. All local records custodians are subject to the Preservation of Essential Records Act.[65]

In 1980, the Department of Libraries contracted with F. Gerald Ham, State Archivist of Wisconsin, and John A. Fleckner, a

state archives staff member at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, to develop a coordinated approach to the management of local public records in Oklahoma. Their resulting report identified several problems:

(1) Storage of noncurrent records which are intended for permanent retention is a problem for local officials. Historically valuable records are stored in areas without any environmental controls and in buildings which have little security against fire. Indeed, fire had destroyed portions of two buildings used for records storage.

(2) Access to noncurrent records by researchers is likely to be difficult at best.

(3) Local government officials at all levels have made a major commitment to microfilming, yet very few applications are based on a systematic approach to records management. Instead, microfilming is usually done as an ad hoc response to a single immediate problem.

(4) Local officials find the statutes governing the disposition of records difficult to interpret, and have a need for guidance and assistance in these matters.

(5) Local governments at all levels are taking on new and more complex activities that generate large quantities of records, thus creating a records management problem of growing concern.[66]

In 1982, the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators (NASARA) issued a statement on the management and preservation of local government records. It addresses nine principles:

(1) Responsibility for management, preservation, and legal disposition of records should be clearly assigned.

(2) Records should be easily accessible to government officials and to the public through the use of indexes, systematic filing systems, and other techniques.

(3) Inactive or noncurrent records should be segregated from active records and stored away from busy office areas.

(4) A vital records program should be developed to ensure the survival of records and information necessary to resume and continue government operations after a serious fire or other catastrophe.

(5) Selected records with long minimum legal retention periods, where the original record is no longer needed and a microfilm copy will suffice, should be considered for microfilming in accordance with guidelines provided by the state archival or records management agency. Microfilm may be substituted for the original records once state standards have been met.

(6) Electronic data processing should be employed where warranted.

(7) Records personnel should be trained in techniques of records and information management.

(8) Obsolete records should be disposed of periodically following legal procedures.

(9) Historically valuable records should be preserved in a local government archives, designated local or regional repository, or the state archives.[67]

In making its recommendations in the area of local government records, OHRAB subscribes to these nine NASARA principles as the framework for a coordinated local government records management program in Oklahoma. It is aware that local government autonomy for its internal operations is essential but each government record in Oklahoma, at whatever level, forms a link in the public records system that can only be considered by relating each part

to the whole. Public records administration is a partnership among municipal, county, and state officials for the common protection of citizen rights. The vertical integration of programs and records is essential, if not fundamental, to our system of government in this state. To cite but two examples of this, the court system in Oklahoma is "shared" between the state and county government. Recording of vital statistics, a traditional local government function, is centralized in the State Department of Health.

Findings and recommendations in this section derive from Ham and Fleckner's conclusions and the NASARA principles, the experience of members of the Local Government Records Task Force, returns from a detailed questionnaire mailed to 385 local government records custodians of whom 143 responded (37%), staff participation at meetings of the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Municipal League, the six public hearings at which citizens voiced many concerns on the condition of local government records, site visits to county and municipal offices in all parts of the state, and meetings of the Project Director and Project Administrator with the County Commissioners of Washington County and Texas County. Fleckner and Ham's full report appears as Appendix D.

The analysis of responses to the Local Government Records Survey Questionnaire confirmed many of Ham and Fleckner's 1980 findings. Sixty-seven percent of those responding indicated that storage space for records was inadequate; 65% lacked adequate financial resources to properly care for their records; 29% compounded this problem with lack of sufficient staff to do the job; 57% found that the records in their custody needed repair to prevent further physical deterioration; 26% had difficulty locating specific records; 26% indicated that records were retained too long while only 4% felt that their records were not retained long enough. Twenty-four percent found that the format in which they kept records made them difficult to handle, store,

and retrieve. Lack of support from local government administrators or their governing body was found to be a problem by 21% of the records custodians responding, while 13% cited poor state policies or guidelines in records administration as a problem, and another 11% cited the lack of training opportunities. Finally, 14% cited a lack of guidance about what records to keep or destroy as a concern. Those responding consisted of county clerks (25%), district court clerks (30%), county assessors (9%), county treasurers (22%), county superintendents of schools (9%), city clerks (2%), city managers/mayors (1%), and city/county clerks (1%).

NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NEED: A Local Records Management Program

Oklahoma must have an integrated program for records created and maintained by its political subdivisions to effectively and economically manage these records, and to ensure the preservation of, and access to, local government records of enduring value.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries and the Archives and Records Commission, working in conjunction with the Administrative Director of the Courts, the Association of County Commissioners, and the Oklahoma Municipal League should initiate legislation amending the Archives Act to bring disposition authorization for local government records within the jurisdiction of the Archives and Records Commission. The Records Management Act should also be amended to make the program of services available to local government similar to that offered to

state agencies. Mandated statutory retention periods should be eliminated along with mandated forms and recording methods. Recording and disposition procedures should be regulated by Commission authorization and by rule and regulation. The Archives and Records Commission and the State Records Administrator should form an Advisory Committee to help further define the local governmental records program, and prepare the necessary legislative changes for action in the 1986 session.

DISCUSSION:

In 1980 Ham and Fleckner concluded, "In general, the statutes governing the administration of local public records lack cohesion, and need to be clarified, amended, and expanded."[68] They found the lack of an archival review procedure prior to destruction of records a "most serious short-coming."[69] They were critical of the statutory retention periods provided for county records.[70] "These statutory schedules not only authorize the destruction of records many archivists consider of important historical value, such as tax rolls, but they provide no method of disposition for those records not covered by schedule."[71]

Oklahoma is one of a few states in the country that has no viable state program for assisting local records custodians in the management and disposition of local government records. The NASARA principles define the relationship between the state and its political subdivisions as a "partnership," with the state agency providing:

(1) records disposition approval;
(2) records management advice and assistance;
(3) a program to ensure the identification and preservation of records with enduring historical or other research values;
(4) micrographics services; and
(5) conservation and restoration services.[72]

The basis for this partnership rests on the recognized status of counties and municipalities as political subdivisions of a state. Applying the same criteria of services to these political subdivisions that exists for state agencies requires amendment of the existing Archives Act to remove the exemption for county and municipal records, and of the Records Management Act to provide the same level of program services for local governments as for state government.[73]

OHRAB recognizes that a previous legislative attempt in 1981 to incorporate local records into an integrated records management system for Oklahoma failed, partly from lack of support of local records custodians.[74] Mutual support for legislation in this partnership is essential. OHRAB therefore recommends that the Archives and Records Commission and the State Records Administrator convene an Advisory Committee in July, 1985, composed of local government officials, to further develop the local government records program recommended in this report. The resulting consensus from this process will increase the chances for a successful legislative initiative. "A major objective of a local records program must be to develop a comprehensive records scheduling and disposition program for all units of local government."[75]

One question on the Local Government Records Survey Questionnaire evoked a surprising response, revealing that local records custodians feel constrained by statutory requirements for forms and methods of recording. For example, each county is required to furnish "blank books" and "fireproof vaults."[76] A number of statutes require District Court Clerks to create and maintain specific types of records in specific formats.[77] These statutory requirements impede economical records-creating and records-maintenance by not recognizing that newer, more efficient methods for information management are now in existence. Mandated recording methods should be eliminated from the statutes and replaced by rules and regulations issued by the State Records

Administrator, Administrative Director for the Courts, or other appropriate governing authority.

NEED: Records Storage Facilities

There is an immediate need to provide secure, environmentally-controlled, fire-proof, clean storage facilities for local government records of enduring value, and other support services to ensure their continued preservation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The State Archives should actively pursue its authority to accept permanently valuable local government records that are in danger of loss or destruction. Plans for construction, renovation, or expansion of State Archives and State Records Center space should include provisions for the storage of local government records in addition to state government records. An initial project, for which the Archives and Records Commission and the Department of Libraries should seek grant support or Legislative appropriations in FY'86, is a survey to determine the quantity of these records extant in local government offices in all Oklahoma counties and selected municipalities. This is an essential first step in planning for records storage, and could be the first major activity that the Local Government Records Unit described below undertakes.

The Archives and Records Commission should use its current authority to enter into contracts with historical records repositories, in various sections of the state to form a network of repositories for housing and servicing nearby local government archives. The Department of Libraries should introduce legislation in 1986 to repeal the provisions of 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 93 prohibiting the removal of records from the county of origin for the purposes of photographing. The Department should

provide preservation and microfilming services for local government records on the same basis as for state agency records.

DISCUSSION:

In Oklahoma today, many local government records are housed in buildings that were constructed prior to 1910. Within these buildings, records are often stored in attics, basements, or hallways after space in office areas is filled. A recent newspaper account describes the problem in an Oklahoma county.

> In both rooms, file cabinets of records were squeezed in beside air ducts and machinery. File folders were strewn across the top of ducts, desks and cabinets. . . . The lack of funds and space has prevented . . . staffing two record rooms and properly storing some of the files.[78]

The cost estimated for staffing these record rooms properly was $30,000 annually.[79]

Survey responses indicate that few records storage areas have adequate temperature and relative humidity controls to protect the records. Fire detection and suppression systems are almost totally lacking. Remote records storage sites often house records that are disorganized and in which locating a specific record may prove impossible. One county commissioner recently was quoted as saying, "You couldn't pay me enough to get up there a storage loft in the county warehouse and open one of those boxes." The reason stated was a fear of the rats and snakes that inhabit the storage area which houses county records dating from 1911 to 1979. A District Court Judge, in considering these same records, stated, "There really is a problem with what to do with them. We're required by law to keep them, but you can't make heads nor tails out of them."[80] Another recent newspaper account reported that it was impossible to find an audit trail for $12,000 missing in one Oklahoma town government

because fire at the former Town Clerk's home had destroyed most of the town's records. The present Town Clerk-Treasurer was quoted as saying, "There were no books to audit." [81]

The Project Director inspected records storage areas in which court records from Indian Territory were housed in a former jail cell on the top floor of the courthouse and were subjected to intense heat in summer, cold in winter, dirt, water from rain coming through broken windows, and pigeon droppings. Another inspection found county records abandoned in the basement of a former county courthouse near an open well, covered with coal dust, and "piled" on the floor to a soggy depth of four feet.[82] In nearly every county building visited, the statutorily mandated vault for records storage was filled to capacity.[83] Often the vaults provided only an illusion of security from both unauthorized access to the records and from fire. In all cases investigated, local government simply does not have the resources to provide proper storage for many of its older records. Even the best storage areas were, from an archival perspective, inadequate for preserving records with enduring value. Sixty-seven percent of local record custodians responding to the survey questionnaire specifically cited lack of adequate storage facilities as a problem.

The Local Government Records Task Force posed two additional questions to local records custodians. The first asked if these officials would use a central records storage facility for housing their noncurrent records. The second asked if they would pay for such storage services. Only 20% responded positively to the first question; fewer responded positively to the second.

OHRAB recommends two actions in order to begin to address the secure and safe storage of noncurrent, permanently valuable local government records. First, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries should actively pursue its authority to accept local records into the State Archives when loss or destruction is probable if they are left in their present storage situation. This action

obviously will have an impact on the space available to house state archives. Any expansion of the storage capacity for either the State Archives or the State Records Center must therefore take into account housing records of the state's political subdivisions.

Many local government officials, naturally, are reluctant to send their records to Oklahoma City for storage. OHRAB recommends a second action. The Archives and Records Commission should issue rules and regulations establishing standards for local archival repositories so that existing historical records collections may accept into physical custody records from either state or local government. This is similar to the proposed depository system outlined in the Ham and Fleckner study. As the initial step, by July, 1985, the Archives and Records Commission should convene an advisory committee from institutions that might serve as regional repositories for government records to develop the structure for such a depository system. OHRAB believes that the Archives and Records Commission has the authority to contract for depository services under its present statutory mandate.

Present Oklahoma law forbids the removal, for photocopying (and presumably for records storage as well), of county records from the county of origin.[84] This statutory restriction is inhibiting and unnecessary. The Department of Libraries should work with the Association of County Commissioners to secure its repeal.

NEED: Local Records Management Program Staff

Staff and supporting resources are required in the Department of Libraries for Oklahoma to implement a comprehensive, effective, efficient program for the management of local government records, and for the preservation of local government archives.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries should create a Local Records Management Unit within the Records Management Division and seek Legislative appropriation to support this program in FY'87.

DISCUSSION:

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries is presently required to furnish records management services to local government.[85] Additionally, local governments are required to comply with the Preservation of Essential Records Act.[86] The Department is unable to commit resources to fulfill these responsibilities. Other than providing for storage of security microfilm, no records management services are offered to local governments.

It is abundantly clear from questionnaire responses and contacts with public officials that a Local Records Management Unit could provide valuable assistance to these records custodians. Emerging records technologies such as micrographics, computer applications, and the linking of the two, make the availability of a records management consulting and assistance program mandatory if county and municipal governments are to economically and effectively employ these technologies. The state's records management agency is the logical provider for the services, either on a partial cost-recovery basis or through direct legislative appropriation. When a large number of local records custodians indicate that their chief sources of information on records management are colleagues struggling with the same problems or equipment vendors, then the need for authoritative and impartial information is self-evident.

The Local Records Management Unit, working in close cooperation with the State Auditor and Inspector, should provide a program of awareness and assistance. Components of this

program should include, but not be limited to:

(1) preparing informational and training materials on a wide variety of records management topics with the first of these focusing on "basic" records management and the second addressing micrographics;

(2) working in conjunction with the appropriate agencies at Oklahoma State University, or separately, developing a series of records management training programs to be conducted on a continuing basis at meetings of local government officials, and at other times and locations throughout the state; and

(3) providing on-site consulting in all phases of records management, initially undertaking an inventory and appraisal project for all county records and for records in selected municipalities.

CONCLUSION

The reasons for a records management program are "to make the records serve the purposes for which they are created as cheaply and effectively as possible, and to make a proper disposition of them after they have served those purposes." [87] "The purpose of records management can be stated in simple terms: fewer and better records." [88] Nowhere in Oklahoma is the need to achieve these purposes clearer than for local government records.

OHRAB believes that the records situation for municipal and county government in our state is at a critical stage, and that a coordinated program to cope with the expanding records-creating and records-keeping requirements of local government is essential. Oklahoma is fortunate to have dedicated public officials who care about records and preserving our state's documentary heritage. But many of these same public officials are, almost desperately, seeking help. The state archives and records management program must respond to these needs and foster the coordinated partnership that OHRAB proposes. The Legislature

must provide the resources necessary to accomplish this partnership. Local governing officials must also do their part.

> In the final analysis, local records management will be as good or as bad as the county or municipality chooses it to be. Local officials have a right to expect advice, encouragement, and assistance from the state archival agency, but the development and administration of an active, effective continuing program - one designed to produce fewer but better records, to provide for an orderly disposition of records after they have served their usefulness, and to assure the preservation and use of records of continuing research value - will remain a fundamental responsibility of local government. In the American system, that is as it should be.[89]

HISTORICAL RECORDS REPOSITORIES

BACKGROUND

There are more than 400 separate institutions in Oklahoma that house historical records. Of these, less than a dozen can be considered major historical research collections. However, many other unique and valuable historical documents are located in public libraries, small academic libraries, local historical societies, museums, churches, genealogical societies, corporations, and with private individuals. Few of these collections have staff to adequately care for them or budgets to service them.

This array of documentary resource repositories ranges from the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma with more than thirty million items and the Oklahoma Historical Society with 27,000 photographs, 1,600 oral history tapes, and 1,870 cu.ft. of "Indian Archives," to single item collections in private hands. Between these extremes are numerous important collections - the photograph and manuscript collection at the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton; a similar collection at the Bartlesville Area History Museum and Archives; genealogy collections at the public libraries in Poteau and Guymon; and the manuscript collections at the No Man's Land Museum in Goodwell, to name but a few. Some of these historical records collections are professionally administered, while others rely on volunteer staff and donations. Within this community of historical records collections, there is a general lack of understanding among administrators, curators, and users about the purposes of archives and manuscript collections; the ways in which these materials should be managed; and the value of the services these collections provide to society.

The needs and recommendations for historical records repositories derive from a detailed questionnaire mailed to 639 potential historical records holders in Oklahoma. Of these, 143 were returned (22%). Many of the identified needs were voiced in six public meetings, at which the vast majority of the participants represented local history collections. The Task Force on Historical Records Repositories investigated several areas of potential concern, identifying specific needs in the areas of education, security, and clarification of the status of state-supported university and college records. These needs are covered in other sections of this report. It also became evident in analyzing the needs of historical records repositories that each shares several problems with all others. These are addressed in the report chapter on "Statewide Services and Functions."

Responses to the survey questionnaire revealed that few institutions had the collecting of historical records as a primary focus, and fewer still had staff trained in archival methodology. Although two-thirds of the 143

Books and boxes stacked randomly illustrate reference and retrieval problems

responding had a written collection policy, many of the smaller collections were "antiquarian" in their collecting philosophy accepting any "old" material, some of which had no relation to the experience of Oklahoma. Eighty percent of those who responded to the questionnaire did not report their holdings to any central data base such as the National Union List of Manuscript Collections or the NHPRC's Directory. The 1978 edition of this latter finding aid lists only 31 Oklahoma institutions.[90] Gaps in collecting historical records in specific areas of the Oklahoma experience exist, one example identified by the Task Force being agricultural records. In other subject areas, particularly natural resources and Native American materials, many collections reflect the intense competition that has led to fragmented holdings of historical materials among several repositories.

As is the case with local public records, many records maintained by historical records repositories are housed in unsatisfactory environments, without fire or security protection, thus jeopardizing their long-term preservation. Of the larger collecting repositories, only 33% have both temperature and relative humidity controls, and only 17% have a fire detection system. The largest repositories store records in "acid-free" materials, but generally holdings of smaller collections are maintained in vertical file cabinets and acidic envelopes. Often the costs and need to purchase "acid-free" supplies in large quantities are given as reasons for not using these materials. Some custodians are unaware that acidic storage containers are a problem.

NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NEED: Training And Assistance

Custodians of historical records need training and consultant

assistance in the basic concepts of historical records preservation and management.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Historical Society should create an Historical Records Field Advisory Service to provide assistance and training to staff and volunteers at institutions and organizations that collect or maintain historical records. Funds for staffing and supporting this service should be requested in the Society's FY'87 budget.

DISCUSSION:

The vast majority of Oklahoma institutions that collect or maintain historical records are staffed by either volunteers or by paid staff who have no archival training or experience. While organizations such as the Oklahoma Chapter of the Western Conservation Congress (OCWCC), the Oklahoma Special Collections and Archives Network (OSCAN), and the Special Collections and Archives Round Table of the Oklahoma Library Association (SCART), can fill part of this training void through workshops and other continuing education offerings, too often these records custodians need more individualized assistance, or are not aware that such organizations exist. The one institution in the state to which they do look for advice and assistance is the Oklahoma Historical Society. Creating an Historical Records Field Advisory Service Unit at OHS will provide professional assistance to these custodians of historical records and to the administrators who are responsible for allocating program resources for their preservation and use. Specific areas of consulting assistance that are needed immediately are preservation planning and implementation, collection development strategies, and grantsmanship.

NEED: Security

Oklahoma needs guidelines for secure records storage facilities, and legislation to penalize individuals for the theft or wanton destruction of library and archival materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries should develop a statement of guidelines during 1985 that would serve as a model for historical records repositories to follow in providing a secure storage environment for historical records. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries should make the OCWCC's Basic Guidelines for Disaster Preparedness available to every library and historical records repository in the state before the end of FY'85.[91] The Department of Libraries, Archives and Records Commission, Oklahoma Library Association, Oklahoma Historical Society, OCWCC, OSCAN and OHRAB should jointly request legislation in the 1986 session, based on model theft legislation in other states, to make the theft or wanton destruction of library and archival materials a felony. This legislation should also provide a structure and procedure for staff to follow when a suspected theft or mutilation is in progress. A program to register stolen materials in both a local data base and the national registry of stolen items maintained by American Book Prices Current, should be implemented.

DISCUSSION:

Many historical records repositories and local government records storage areas have no provisions to secure the records from theft or fire. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries' Office of Preservation Services should draft a statement of guidelines

that these institutions could use in assessing their particular security risks and in developing alternatives to lessen them. The Oklahoma Chapter of the Western Conservation Congress has written a manual on disaster preparedness that has achieved national acclaim as a disaster planning model. Every Oklahoma library and historical records repository should have access to this publication.

Oklahoma does not have a specific law providing penalties for the theft or wanton mutilation of library and archival materials. Prosecution for stealing from libraries and historical records repositories is difficult to obtain, and the staff in these institutions have little guidance on how to proceed if a theft is suspected. Yet, the documented incidents of library and archives thefts are increasing, and Oklahoma institutions are not immune to these crimes. Several states have adopted model anti-theft laws based on shop-lifting legislation. The Oklahoma Legislature should pass similar legislation. The Department of Libraries should create and maintain a state registry of stolen materials, modeled after BAMBAM (Bookline Alert: Missing Books and Manuscripts) that American Book Prices Current has created and maintains. ODL can also facilitate entering this information into BAMBAM.

NEED: Resources

Oklahoma historical records repositories are underfunded and require additional resources to properly protect and make available the valuable historical records in their custody.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

OHRAB should take an active role during 1985 to promote the grant programs of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities,

and other sources of outside program support to bring additional resources to the historical records preservation community in Oklahoma. In addition, OHRAB should actively seek to place historical records presently in institutions that are unwilling or unable to provide for their adequate preservation into the proposed regional repositories or with other institutions that can provide adequate archival services. It should also provide active assistance in helping all state-supported historical records programs to receive the funding necessary to accomplish their missions.

DISCUSSION:

The vast majority of Oklahoma historical records repositories cannot provide adequate care and protection for their holdings. This statement holds true for repositories that receive state appropriations, including the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma. OHRAB must take an active leadership role in advocating additional funding to support these collections, either at the local and state levels, or from state and national granting agencies. When a host institution is not able or is unwilling to properly protect and make holdings available, OHRAB should work with that institution to seek placement of the historical records in another facility that has the resources for their proper protection. Historical records that are crammed into dirty basements or attics, stored in acidic folders or wood cabinets, or otherwise fail to receive supervised archival care are not preserved. They merely survive for a period of time.

CONCLUSION:

Historical records repositories in Oklahoma are often under-funded, and lack even the basic resources to care for their

collections. Many of them share common problems that are considered in the next section of this report. Yet, these problems may require individual assistance as well as cooperative attention. Oklahoma must adopt programs to assist these records custodians at both levels simultaneously.

Darkened by water and rot, historical documents show damage resulting from inferior facility

STATEWIDE SERVICES AND FUNCTIONS

BACKGROUND

The past five years have witnessed a growing spirit and interest in cooperative approaches to solving common problems among special collections and archival repositories in Oklahoma. Entities of the political subdivisions of the state, excluding public libraries, seem less inclined toward cooperation, preferring instead to solve common problems locally.

There are two statewide organizations that place Oklahoma in the forefront of institutional and programmatic cooperation nationally. These are the Oklahoma Chapter of the Western Conservation Congress (OCWCC), organized in 1980, and the Oklahoma Special Collections and Archives Network (OSCAN), organized in 1984.

The OCWCC is a direct result of the NHPRC-funded Western States Materials Conservation Project (WSMCP), sponsored by the Western Council of State Libraries of which Oklahoma is a member. As one phase of that Project, WSMCP staff conducted needs assessment meetings in each of 18 Western Council states asking participants to identify areas of need concerning the physical preservation of documentary resources and then asking them to identify actions that would begin to address the needs identified. The Oklahoma meeting, held December 5, 1979, identified the following needs: (1) a program of training workshops to provide basic conservation information and skills; (2) a system to disseminate conservation information; (3) a program for microfilming documentary resources and preserving photographic materials; (4) an inventory of documentary resources

in Oklahoma; (5) a statewide disaster preparedness plan; and (6) the availability of conservation expertise in the state.[92] OCWCC has moved vigorously since 1979 to meet these needs. Each year it sponsors two conservation training programs, an annual meeting of members, publishes a newsletter, Conservation Oklahoma Now, and, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, has created O-DRAT, the Oklahoma Disaster Recovery Assistance Team. OCWCC has also published a nationally received set of Basic Guidelines for Disaster Planning.[93]

The Oklahoma Special Collections and Archives Network was formed in 1984. OSCAN is an institutional membership organization that now numbers 31. Its purposes are to expand cooperative activities among member institutions, develop new cooperative projects, identify needs related to archival and specialized research materials in or about Oklahoma, call these needs to the attention of appropriate agencies or groups, and disseminate information about collections and issues concerning archival and special research materials located in or relating to Oklahoma.[94] A new organization, OSCAN already has initiated two major projects. The first is to secure microfilm copies of the Oklahoma Townsite Cases from the National Archives. This will involve raising about $25,000 to pay for filming activity. The second is to conduct a survey and publish a guide to archives and special collections in Oklahoma.

NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The needs and recommended actions suggested in this section derive from the report of the Western States Materials Conservation Project for Oklahoma, a meeting of the Task Force on Statewide Concerns held at the Department of Libraries on September 19, 1984, and comments records custodians provided in the six public meetings.[95] At the Task Force meeting, five general needs were identified: (1) to raise awareness about the

value of historical records and the requirements for preserving them; (2) to learn what historical records exist and how one can gain access to them; (3) to train and educate persons responsible for the care and maintenance of historical records; (4) to provide specialized services that one institution cannot alone provide, such as conservation laboratory services; and (5) to develop a cooperative collecting strategy among institutions statewide. Task Force members viewed both OSCAN and OCWCC as important resources in the state that were already attempting to meet many of these general needs. Together with the Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board, mechanisms for cooperation and leadership already exist in Oklahoma.

NEED: Focus Attention On The Value Of Historical Records

There is a need to provide a focus of attention on the value of, and uses for Oklahoma's historical records.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Historical Records Advisory Board should actively work with the Office of the Governor, the Legislative leadership, and other appropriate organizations to emphasize the preservation and use of Oklahoma's historical documentary heritage, and to encourage adoption of "Documenting Oklahoma History" as a theme for celebrating the centennial of the land runs and statehood.

DISCUSSION:

Celebration of the 1889 Land Run Centennial affords the first of several opportunities leading to the centennial celebration of statehood in 2007 for historical records custodians in Oklahoma to focus public attention on their collections - their value and

uses. Documentation of the runs exists in many Oklahoma repositories and forms the core of information on which many of the centennial events will be based. Public interest in these celebrations will be high, and the chances to raise public awareness and emphasize historical records through the media, exhibits, publications, and audio-visual presentations are natural opportunities for OHRAB to exert its leadership role as an advocate for historical documents.

NEED: Institutional Coordination

Various organizations in Oklahoma that are currently working to provide solutions to common documentary resources problems must coordinate their activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

OHRAB should issue an invitation during the first quarter of 1985, and convene a meeting of representatives of the governing boards of each of these organizations to plan for a coordinated program approach to our common problems.

DISCUSSION:

Oklahoma is fortunate that it numbers several organizations concerned specifically with special collections and archival resources. In addition to OSCAN and OCWCC, the Oklahoma Library Association through its Special Collections and Archives Roundtable (SCART), the Oklahoma Museum Association, the Oklahoma Federation of Genealogical Societies, local chapters of the Special Libraries Association and of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA), also share an interest in the preservation and utilization of records. Findings from this assessment project will serve as the initial agenda for the

planning meeting. Among issues to be considered will be conflicting program areas, such as education and training offerings, division of responsibilities for providing services both to organizational members and nonmembers, and identification of service "gaps" that no organization is filling currently.

NEED: Administrative Support For OHRAB

Oklahoma must provide administrative support to strengthen and coordinate the program efforts of organizations in Oklahoma already working to provide cooperative solutions to common problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

OHRAB should prepare a grant proposal seeking funds to establish an Executive Secretary position and office for the Historical Records Advisory Board. Funds should be requested for a two year period at the minimum. Further funding for this position should come from legislative appropriation beginning in FY'88. The OHRAB State Coordinator should prepare this grant application for Board action by June 1, 1985.

DISCUSSION:

The Task Force on Statewide Concerns felt strongly that additional support for existing cooperative programs in Oklahoma is essential for long-term success. OHRAB, OSCAN, OCWCC, SCART, and other historical interest groups have no staff. Instead they rely on the volunteer efforts of members or persons employed by other institutions. Given the ambitious programs planned by each over the next two year period - programs that begin to meet many of the needs identified in this assessment project - a staff position with specific responsibilities to support these

historical records program activities is required. This person would have as primary tasks outreach programs, advocacy efforts, communications, exhibits, development and delivery of training programs, and general administrative support for historical records undertakings under the direction and supervision of OHRAB.

NEED: Preservation Microfilming Service

A statewide preservation microfilming service to copy information contained on deteriorating historical records onto a more stable medium is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) and the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) should jointly develop a coordinated program for implementation in FY'87, and seek the resources to expand existing preservation microfilming efforts in each agency for early newspapers and manuscripts (OHS), and governmental records from all levels (ODL).

DISCUSSION:

Both OHS and ODL presently have programs for preservation microfilming of historical documentary materials. Each has a limited scope that could expand into a more active, coordinated program for preservation filming statewide. Initial program concentration should focus on materials from Territorial and early statehood (pre-1920) for it is these paper documents that are deteriorating most rapidly. One alternative for ODL and OHS to explore is a mobile microfilming unit. Again, successful implementation of a preservation microfilming program for county records requires eliminating the statutory language that

prohibits removing county records from the county of origin for photocopying. [96]

NEED: Preservation And Conservation Services

Oklahoma institutions need access to conservation treatment facilities, and professional preservation advice and assistance.

A close-up of deteriorating historical documents

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries should seek additional resources to expand the program and facilities of its Office of Preservation Services to include, by FY'90, basic conservation treatment services on a cost recovery basis for all public and not-for-profit historical records repositories and libraries in Oklahoma.

ODL, through its membership in the AMIGOS Bibliographic Council, should encourage AMIGOS to further develop and implement the proposed AMIGOS Preservation Services program (APS). OCWCC should actively support this effort.

DISCUSSION:

OCWCC has successfully raised the "conservation consciousness" of many Oklahoma librarians, archivists, and manuscript curators, by providing basic information and training for them. However, Oklahoma lacks any program that could support institutional level preservation efforts by providing basic conservation laboratory treatments to repair deteriorated documentary materials - especially books, individual papers, and photographs from the first half of the 20th century. Potential exists for the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, through its Office of Preservation Services and with additional resources, to begin to fill this void.

Preservation and conservation treatments for documentary resources are expensive, labor-intensive, and the problem exacerbated by the fact that trained library and archives preservation experts are few in number. Regional programs that share preservation expertise and laboratory facilities offer a viable alternative. Recently AMIGOS formed a committee to develop and seek funding for a preservation service package to meet the needs of its member institutions and other libraries in

the Southwest. Models for the AMIGOS effort are programs in the Southeastern region of the United States administered by SOLINET and the Northeast Document Conservation Center, headquartered in Andover, Massachusetts. A regional approach to providing sophisticated preservation and conservation treatment services warrants Oklahoma's active support.

CONCLUSION:

The move among institutions and individuals in Oklahoma to find cooperative solutions for common historical records management and preservation problems is a sign of strength. OHRAB pledges its continued support for these efforts, and will reconsider its priorities for recommending NHPRC funding for Oklahoma projects to reflect this commitment.

ENDNOTES

[1] Laws 1890, 486.

[2] Laws 1897, 116.

[3] H.B. 415 (1908).

[4] S.B. 68 (1939).

[5] H.B. 337 (1947).

[6] H.B. 1124 (1961); H.B. 1123 (1961).

[7] H.B. 426 (1949).

[8] H.B. 1516 (1972).

[9] Posner, Ernst. American State Archives. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. 219.

[10] 48 U.S. Stat. L. 501.

[11] The Sunday Oklahoman, September 9, 1984. 2.

[12] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 153; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 203.

[13] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 202.

[14] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 152.

[15] 74 O.S. 1983 Supp., sec. 564.

[16] Ibid.; 74 O.S. 1981, sec. 150.7.

[17] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 153; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 203.

[18] 74 O.S. 1981, sec. 565; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 204; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 155.

[19] 65 O.S. 1981, sec. 3-116 et seq.

[20] 65 O.S. 1981, sec. 3-113.1 et seq.

[21] H.B. 415 (1908).

[22] S.B. 68 (1939).

[23] H.B. 337 (1947).

[24] Ibid.

[25] S.B. 66 (1975); H.B. 1504 (1979); S.B. 296 (1979).

[26] H.B. 1124 (1961); H.B. 1123 (1961).

[27] S.B. 459 (1968).

[28] H.B. 1516 (1972); 20 O.S. 1981, sec. 1314.

[29] Posner. American State Archives. 222.

[30] Tulsa Tribune, January 21, 1984. 1.

[31] Oklahoma Legislative Council. Performance Audit: Department of Libraries, May 30, 1977.

[32] Ibid., 16.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Bellardo, Lewis J. An Appraisal of the Public Records Program of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 1984. 2.

[35] Legislative Council Report, 17; 21.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Bellardo Report, 20-21.

[38] Ibid., 21.

[39] Ibid., 10-15.

[40] Legislative Council Report, 20.

[41] Ibid., 23.

[42] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 153; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 203; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 208.

[43] 74 O.S. 1981, sec. 565.

[44] 41 CFR 105-61.

[45] Bellardo Report, 24.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 26.

[48] Ibid., 24.

[49] Legislative Council Report, 23.

[50] Holland, Michael E., Brad Koplowitz and Sam Sizer, Planning and Implementing a Program for Managing the Machine-Readable Records of Oklahoma State Agencies: A Preliminary Report. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Resources Branch, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, February 9, 1984.

[51] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 153; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 203; Attorney General Opinion 83-191.

[52] State Policy Reports. Arlington, VA: State Policy Research Inc., August 8, 1983.

[53] Unpublished report of Thomas E. Brown for the Oklahoma Department of Libraries dated November 2, 1982.

[54] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 301.

[55] 12 O.S. 1981, sec. 521 et seq.

[56] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 153; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 203.

[57] Skupsky, Donald S. and Merrill J. Grummer, Oklahoma Court Records Management Project: Final Report. Denver: National Center for State Courts, December, 1979.

[58] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 202.

[59] Laws 1890, 486; Laws 1897, 116.

[60] S.B. 39 (1935).

[61] H.B. 426 (1949); H.B. 337 (1947).

[62] H.B. 1516 (1972).

[63] 19 O.S. 1981, secs. 155.1-155.6

[64] 20 O.S. 1981, sec. 1005.

[65] 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 151 et seq.

[66] Fleckner, John A. and F. Gerald Ham. Local Public Records in Oklahoma: A Report and Recommendations, July, 1980. 4-5.

[67](Brochure). Principles for the Management of Local Government Records. Albany, NY:National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators, 1982.

[68]Fleckner and Ham Report. 7.

[69]Ibid.

[70]19 O.S. 1981, secs. 155.1-155.6; 20 O.S. 1981, sec. 1005.

[71]Fleckner and Ham Report. 8.

[72]Principles for the Management of Local Government Records .

[73]74 O.S. Supp. 1983, sec. 564; 67 O.S. 1981, sec. 207.

[74]H.B. 1161 (1981).

[75]Fleckner and Ham Report. 11.

[76]19 O.S. 1981, sec. 339.

[77]Skupsky Report. 2;6-9; 12 O.S. 1981, sec. 22; 20 O.S. 1981, sec. 91.2; 22 O.S. 1981, sec. 1275; 12 O.S. 1981, secs. 29-30.

[78]The Daily Oklahoman, October 18, 1984, 13.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid., May 30, 1984, 8.

[81]Ibid., October 3, 1984. 1.

[82]Creek County Courthouse, Supulpa; Cherokee Nation Capitol, Tahlequah.

[83]19 O.S. 1981, sec. 339.

[84]67 O.S. 1981, sec. 93.

[85]67 O.S. 1981, sec. 207.

[86]67 O.S. 1981, sec. 151 et seq.

[87]Schellenberg, T.R. Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956. 37.

[88]Leahy, Emmett J. and Christopher A. Cameron. Modern Records Management: A Basic Guide to Records Control, Filing and Information. New York: McGraw Hill, 1965. 17.

[89] Jones, H.G. Local Government Records: Their Management, Preservation, and Use. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1980. 103.

[90] Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the United States. Washington: National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 1978. 526-532.

[91] Disaster Task Force Committee, Oklahoma Chapter of the Western Conservation Congress. Basic Guidelines for Disaster Planning. Tulsa: University of Tulsa, 1982. (Xerox copy).

[92] Lowell, Howard P. and Karen Day. Western States Materials Conservation Project: Final Report. Denver: Western Council of State Libraries, December, 1980. (Appendix Report on Oklahoma meeting).

[93] Basic Guidelines for Disaster Planning.

[94] OSCAN Constitution, Art. 2, Sec. 1 (Goals and Objectives).

[95] Lowell and Day. Final Report.

[96] Attorney General Opinion 83-34.

GLOSSARY

Acid Free. The term used for paper and board stock that has been treated with an alkaline substance to counteract or neutralize acid. Archival storage materials should be made from alkaline reserve stock materials. A pH of 7.0 is the minimum level acceptable.

Active Records. Records necessary for conducting the current business of an office and which must be maintained in office space or equipment.

Administrative Value. In appraisal, the usefulness of records to the originating or succeeding agency in the conduct of current business.

Appraisal. The process of determining whether documentary materials have sufficient value to warrant acquisition and preservation by an archival repository.

Archival Value. The continuing worth of documentary materials for preservation in an archival repository.

Archives. (1) The noncurrent records of an organization or institution preserved because of their continuing value. (2) The agency responsible for selecting, preserving, and making available records determined to have permanent or continuing value. (3) The building in which an archival repository is located.

Collecting Policy. A policy established by an archival repository that identifies the subject areas, time periods, and formats for documentary materials that it seeks for donation or purchase.

Confidential Records. Records that are not available for use by the general public. Also called RESTRICTED or CLASSIFIED record. In Oklahoma government, records are deemed to be confidential only by statute or administrative rule and regulation.

Conservation. Treatments that stabilize, repair or restore deteriorated records to a condition where they can be used; Transfer of information from a deteriorating recording medium to a more stable recording medium.

Cubic Feet. Measurement of volume for records, archives, and manuscripts, 1'x1'x1'; also shown as cu.ft. or c.f.

Custody. The guardianship of records, archives, and manuscripts which may include both physical possession (protective responsibility) and legal title (legal responsibility).

Disposition. The final action that puts into effect the results of an appraisal decision for a series of records. Transfer to an archival repository, transfer to a records center, or destruction are among possible disposition actions.

Disposition Schedule. Document governing retention and disposition of current and noncurrent records of an organization or agency. Also called a RECORDS CONTROL SCHEDULE or a RETENTION SCHEDULE.

Document. Recorded information, regardless of form or medium, with three basic elements: base; impression; message. Frequently used interchangeably with RECORD or DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS.

Documentary Materials. See DOCUMENT.

Essential Records. Those records necessary for an office or agency to carry on its business, and to protect the rights and interests of government and individual citizens, following a disaster. Also called VITAL RECORDS.

Evidential Value. In appraisal, records that are necessary to provide an authentic and adequate documentation of organization, functions, and actions.

Fiscal Value. In appraisal, records required until audit is completed, or financial obligations fulfilled.

Historical Value. In appraisal, records which show an organization's or agency's origin, administrative development, structure, policies, procedures, and important transactions, and which are preserved for research. Also called RESEARCH VALUE.

Inactive Records. Records that are referenced less than once per month per cubic foot are considered inactive and suitable for low-cost storage outside the immediate office. Also called SEMI-CURRENT RECORDS.

Informational Value. In appraisal, worth of records derived from the information they contain on persons, places, subjects, and the like.

Legal Value. In appraisal, the usefulness of records containing evidence of legally enforceable rights or obligations. See also EVIDENTIAL VALUE.

Linear Feet. Measurement for descriptive or control purposes of shelf space occupied by archives, records or manuscripts; the length of film, tape or microfilm is usually expressed in linear feet.

Machine-Readable Records (MRR). Records for which the informational content is in code and has been recorded on a medium such as magnetic tape, drums, discs, or punched paper tape, and which are accompanied by finding aids known as software documentation. The coded information is retrievable only with the aid of a computer.

Manuscript Repository. An archival institution primarily responsible for collecting and preserving personal papers.

Microfilm. Reduced scale, photographic record of documentary materials.

Microforms. Microfilm media, including reels, fiche, jackets, and computer output microfilm (COM).

Noncurrent Records. Records no longer required in the conduct of current business that, therefore, can be accessioned into an archival repository or destroyed.

Preservation. Action taken to slow or prevent the deterioration or damage of archival records. Basic actions to provide adequate facilities for the protection, care and maintenance of archives, records and manuscripts.

Primary Ssource. Unpublished, unique documentary materials.

Public Records: Records created or received by a public agency in the normal course of its business, and which are open to public inspection by law or custom.

Records. Recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics of the medium, made or received by an organization or institution in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of its business.

Records Center. A facility especially designed and constructed to provide low-cost, efficient storage and reference service on inactive records pending ultimate disposition.

Records Management. The application of management techniques to the creation, utilization, maintenance, retention, preservation, and disposition of records undertaken to reduce costs and improve efficiency in records-keeping. Includes management of filing and microfilming equipment and supplies; filing and information retrieval systems; files, correspondence, reports, and forms

management; historical documentation; micrographics; systems applications; retention scheduling; and essential records protection.

Repository. A facility where archives or manuscripts are preserved. Also known as a DEPOSITORY.

Retention Schedule. See DISPOSITION SCHEDULE.

Schedule. (v.) To establish retention periods for current records and provide for their proper disposition at the end of active use. (n.) See DISPOSITION SCHEDULE.

Security Copy. Copy, usually microfilm, of an essential record that is stored for security purposes in a location apart from the original records.

Series. A body of file units or documents arranged in accordance with a unified filing system or maintained by the records center as a unit because of some relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, or use.

Vital Records. See ESSENTIAL RECORDS.